

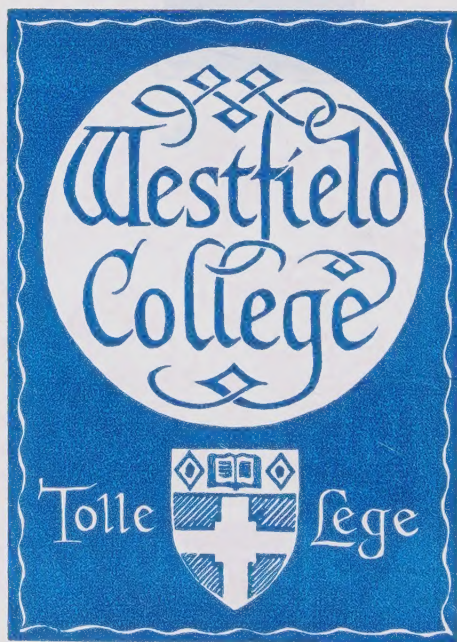
REVIEW OF REVUES  
Edited by C. B. C.



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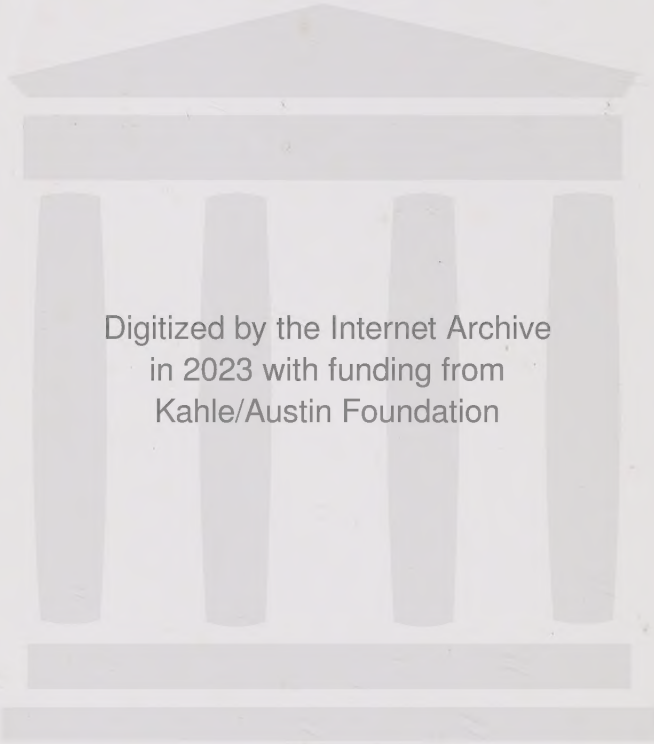
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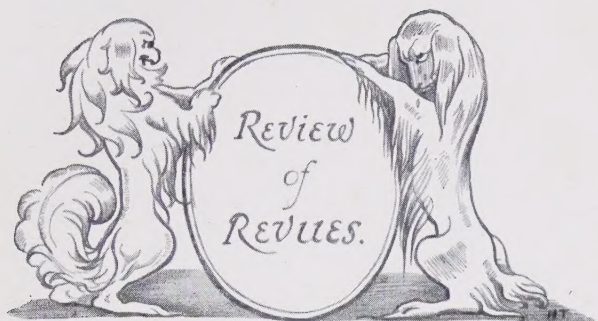






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Birnstingl

*A Party of Strollers*

*Ursula Birnstingl*



REVIEW OF REVUES  
& OTHER MATTERS

Edited by



MCMXXX  
JONATHAN CAPE  
BEDFORD SQUARE  
LONDON



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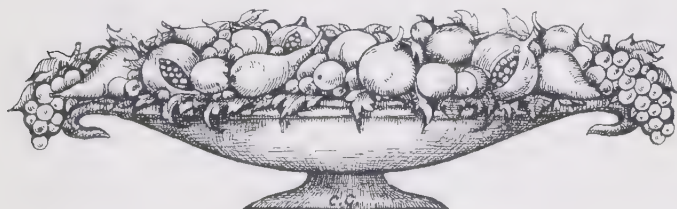
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## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

I ONLY hope Mr. Wickham Steed won't bring an action against me for theft by parody! The quite irrelevant title of this miscellany was, in fact, imposed on me by an over-zealous collaborator. When I said, 'But this is not concerned either with Revues or Reviews', he gave me a look of such profound pity that I weakly yielded. I don't yet quite know why.

What I have tried to do is to put together here some matter of general interest to serious (and I don't mean only highbrow) lovers of the theatre, and to 'present' or 'produce' it in the most attractive way. And I should like here to thank for his much valued co-operation my friend Joseph Thorp, who is responsible for the typography and *décor*, and who has helped me in other ways.

If I have left in some references to myself which are too kind, it is because I saw no graceful way of avoiding them. I have naturally turned to friends for co-operation, and in this little recreative adventure friends, or at any rate it seems my friends, won't put aside their absurd personal prejudices in my favour.

I think the letters of the critics in answer to a question of mine contain matter which is of real objective value. Naturally, the cynic may say, it is my business to flatter the critics. Well, that may be. But I have never found that those among them whose judgement I rate highest have ever hesitated to express their disapproval when what I have done does not conform to their standards. And no criticism on any other basis is of any real significance.

I should like, in fine, to say what great pleasure it has been

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## BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

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to me to secure the co-operation of the brilliant *young* artists, Althea Willoughby, Claudio Guercio, Ursula Kerr (now Ursula Bernstingl), Edward Bawden, Denis Tegetmeier, Edward Carrick, and Ceri Richards. The young are a hobby of mine. The work of Nicholson, Fougasse, Dowd, 'Tom-Titt' and Oliver Messel is, of course, better known and needs no advertisement from me. I am particularly glad to have a contribution from my old friend, Ernst Stern, and from that brilliant *régisseur*, Theodore Komisarjevsky.

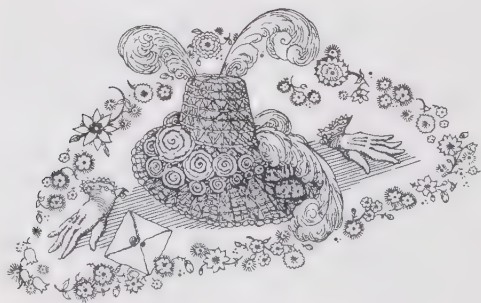
This has been all great fun:

*'Does he paint? He fain would write a poem—  
Does he write? He fain would paint a picture.'*

Is he a showman? He fain would be an editor!

Which reminds me; the opinions expressed (as the editors say) in this little volume do not always necessarily coincide with my own. But it is none of my business to try to suppress them.

C. B. C.



# THOSE THEATRICAL THEORIES

By Ashley Dukes



WHEN we hear talk of realism or symbolism or expressionism in the theatre, what exactly does it mean to us? The theatrical show seems to go on just as before. The stage drawing-room looks more than ever like a real drawing-room; the stage tree looks more than ever unlike a real tree. The stage leg, which is a mainstay of the theatre in most countries, performs its evolutions with a beautiful indifference to all but the considerations of the moment and the front row of stalls. 'Nothing expressionist about me,' 'Nothing symbolist about me', 'Nothing realist about me,' echo the various puppets of the stage. So far as the nightly theatre is concerned, one might suppose that Bakst and Stravinsky, Manet and Renoir and Picasso, Epstein and Einstein for that matter, had lived and worked in vain.

Yet change and experiment are going on in the theatre as in other arts, only more slowly and more haphazardly. We should understand them better if we could accustom ourselves to thinking of the theatre as an art. From habit we call actors artists, but the theatre itself is so often regarded as a pure diversion or a branch of literature or a platform of argument that people forget its claim to rank with music, painting, poetry, or sculpture as a separate form of expression. It comes as a shock to discover how far behind the times the theatre really is, by comparison with these other



arts. Its ordinary practice is about two generations behind them.

Intellectually the playwright has done his best for the theatre of our day. Decidedly he has made it think. He has even made it the chief forum of thought and discussion. The theatre owes its position in the forefront of affairs very largely to him. But artistically he has taught people to believe that a playhouse exists for publishing drama, just as a printing-house exists for publishing literature. And this is a most unfortunate heresy, for the theatre is not only a composite form of expression in which several artists take part, but it is also an independent language, an original language, and not a vehicle for the translation of another language called drama. When the playwright speaks this original language of the theatre, he is able to write drama; and when he fails to speak it he should choose another kind of expression. Drama is a contribution to theatrical performance, or it is nothing.

Many actors and producers of plays, being properly respectful to the dramatist who has given them so much, are inclined to surrender to him altogether and to say that his decree must be law in the playhouse. But others, being artists with notions of their own about the purpose of the theatre and theatrical art, insist that the playwright shall bring them work that fits into the scheme of joint expression. There in a nutshell is the theatrical question of the present day. It is more or less the same in all countries. Certainly it is the same in England, Germany, France, America—the leaders in the world of theatrical art. Russia, so far as we

know, possesses no drama of any consequence since the Revolution, but it possesses a very interesting theatre which is bound to react upon the rest of the world.

Historically it is pretty clear that the periods of good drama have been mostly periods of theatrical greatness, that is to say periods when the stage enjoyed some special degree of popular or royal favour, and was able to attract writers to its service by its own prestige. Both the stage of Shakespeare and the stage of Molière were of this description. Many of the world's masterpieces have been written by hack playwrights (who also were fortunately hack poets).

But whether the dramatist be inspired by the stage or the stage by the dramatist, it is certain that the theatre cannot stand still. It must move either by its own will or by that of writers who impose their will upon it. In these last two generations, which we are accustomed to call the modern period, the theatre has learned much both from their experience and its own. All the much-discussed forms of stage presentation, whose names more or less explain themselves—realism or naturalism or lifelikeness, symbolism or dramatic imagery, expressionism or the wresting of reality from appearance, constructivism or mechanized shape given to the art of mechanized civilization—originated with dramatists to whom the new form was itself a symbol of the new thought spoken. The vanguard theatre at any rate has learned something from all of them, and the everyday theatre will learn in time.

The theatrical question to-day is how to profit by the experience gained in decade after decade of experiment.

Already beside the great modern writers for the theatre we think of the great artists who have served it—Stanislavsky, Brahm, Reinhardt, Appia, Craig, perhaps Piscator and Meierhold among the newer generation. In the presence of so great and so varied an achievement, who will speak of theatrical theories? It is not the theorists who count to-day, or will count in the immediate future, but the practical men whose minds are open to the accomplishment of the past and the possibility of the future.

And meanwhile we should pray for less dramatic criticism, written from the standpoint of the play alone, and more theatrical criticism, written with an understanding of the theatre and its aims.





# A CHORUS GIRL UNDER GEORGE EDWARDES

By Constance Collier



DO not suppose we differed very fundamentally from the girls of to-day when I was a chorus girl, except that the majority of us were not so talented.

We were not expected to act and dance and sing and play in sketches as the girls of to-day seem to be able to do, and yet I think we worked just as hard and under very severe discipline.

Of course, I was a superlative chorus girl, because I was under George Edwardes, and that is like being under Florenz Ziegfeld or C. B. Cochran, except that Mr. Cochran has no chorus girls, only 'young ladies'.

I often wonder why he changed the title. There are so many 'young ladies' in the world and so few fine chorus girls.

The public think it very easy to walk into the chorus. Any girl who is tired of doing amateur jobs thinks she can walk through the stage door and compete with the hardest working and perhaps the most sincerely professional performers on the stage.

When I was a chorus girl I remember I went to George Edwardes immature and raw. I was very pretty and had had some experience of the stage, but I did not know how to make my points, so to speak, or to cultivate my looks. I had a bulky figure and my hair was rough and untidy, and I had never thought of a manicurist, but all these things were part of the equipment of a chorus girl.

Mr. Edwardes had classes for dancing and singing and fencing to improve our figures and voices. We were sent to a special hairdresser and taught to wear simple but well-cut clothes. We were never permitted to be untidy on or off the stage, and our looks were improved twenty per cent before we appeared in front of the public.

But with all this, we did not have to compete with the principals, and although we were just as important an asset to the company we were not expected to have very much talent, but only looks and style. We joined in the choruses of the principal songs, our weak and polite voices accentuated by our plainer sisters, who were kept well in the background. To-day, a chorus girl supersedes the principal, and the ensemble numbers are the most important items of the production.

How they do it, I do not know, rushing up and down stairs, changing their dresses, but flying on to the stage smiling and radiant, and doing complicated and difficult dances lasting, sometimes, ten minutes, and receiving more applause than any number in the production generally.

This is true of American chorus girls particularly. They never seem to leave the stage except to change their clothes in a hurry, and they carry the whole production on their pretty shoulders.

The Ziegfeld girls particularly, who are renowned as the most beautiful women in the world, have the hardest working lives imaginable. Moreover, if they begin to sag or droop or lose their looks, Mr. Ziegfeld orders them off to a milk farm where they have to go on a diet for two or three weeks

to get themselves into thorough condition again. They are in perpetual training and have to live the lives of racehorses more or less, or they could not keep their beauty and get through the work they have to do.

They are the most maligned people in the world, because there is not time in the twenty-four hours of the day and night to accomplish all the work they do and live the gay and frivolous life credited to them.

Most of them neither drink nor smoke, and eat very sparingly. They are better paid in these days than we were, and some of them get as big a salary as the principals.

Most of the burlesques of musical comedy in America are of the principals feebly fighting their way to the front through a mass of brilliant chorus girls.

Many of us came from the chorus in the Gaiety days, and we owe a great deal to our training with George Edwardes. Gladys Cooper was in the George Edwardes chorus and now she is right at the top of her profession. Evelyn Laye was in the chorus. So were Lilian Davies and Gertrude Lawrence and Jessie Matthews.

I do not know if they will agree with me that they owe much to that fundamental training and hard work of those early days when they were only chorus girls. I would not have given up my chorus training for anything in the world. It gives one an ease on the stage and a sense of ensemble work, and a knowledge of how to play for the good of the production and not for individual success at the cost of a play.

When you are trained to work as a unit for the good of

an entire number, that idea filters through your future work in the theatre and you learn to act for the betterment of a play as a whole, and not for your personal glorification.

For instance, think of the brilliant work of the Totem dance, which made the success of *Rose Marie*. Thank goodness, I had the privilege of being in the chorus!








Vauxhall, 1710.

Woodcut by Althea Willoughby

# TWENTY YEARS AGO

By Sydney Dark

Y knowledge of the theatre gave me my entrance into journalism, and for the first fourteen years of my journalistic life the theatre was my chief preoccupation. From 1902 to 1914 I must have seen almost every London first night. As a playgoer, I was in those days the serious rival of Dr. Bulloch.

The beginning of the War brought my professional playgoing to an end, and since the War I have been at very few first nights, and I have, indeed, seen comparatively few plays. It is an interesting psychological fact, not, I suggest, to be attributed to any real meanness of spirit, that the man who has once been on the free list squirms when he hands good money into the box-office.

However, in these later years, my playgoing has been sufficient to give me some sort of idea of the progress of the British drama (if indeed there is, or ever has been, such progress) and of the standard of British acting as compared with the halcyon days when I was on familiar and even Christian name terms with what were then the picture post-card favourites.

For the purpose of this article I have been looking at the theatre advertisements of 1909. As it seems to me, the greatest change that has come over the theatre is the disappearance of the actor-manager. Twenty years ago, Herbert Tree, one of the men whose death I shall always lament and for whose affection I shall always be grateful, controlled His

Majesty's; George Alexander was at the St. James's; Cyril Maude and his wife, that superb comedienne, Winifred Emery, were at the Playhouse; and among the other actor-managers were Lewis Waller, H. B. Irving, and Gerald du Maurier. The actor-manager may have affected virtuoso plays and have claimed more than his fair share of the lime-light, but the best of the actor-managers were artists, caring much more for art than for money, and the theatre was far safer in their hands than in the control of the post-war Anglo-American syndicates, who care a great deal for money, which, happily, they appear generally to lose, and know nothing at all of art.

Musical comedy had its distinguished exponents in 1909. Teddy Payne and Gertie Millar (who but herself could ever be her parallel? as a famous advertisement in the *Era* used to ask) were the stars at the Gaiety, with George Grossmith and Maisie Gay; Joe Coyne, Lily Elsie, W. H. Berry, Gabrielle Ray, daintiest of dancers, and Miss Gladys Cooper, who surely then never dreamed of playing Mrs. Tanqueray, were the leading members of the company at Daly's.

Charles Hawtrey, the most accomplished light comedian of my experience, was acting in Arnold Bennett's *What the Public Wants*; Weedon Grossmith, George Grossmith's uncle, was appearing with Miss Compton, Fay Compton's aunt; Fred Terry and Julia Neilson were to be seen in the costume melodramas which they had then been playing for years, and which they have been playing ever since. And among the other names, familiar to playgoers of to-day, on

the playbills of twenty years ago, were Harcourt Williams, Basil Gill, Charles Quartermaine, Marie Lohr, Rosina Filippi, Robert Loraine, Aubrey Smith, and Lilian Braithwaite, that most accomplished lady who is a better actress to-day, if I may be permitted to say so, than she was even then.

The plays produced in the London theatres in 1909, which included Sir Arthur Pinero's *Mid Channel*, were not on the whole of a very high order of artistic excellence. The Vedrenne Barker management at the Court, the most interesting theatrical venture of a generation, which gave Mr. Shaw his first real chance of proving his genius, had come to an end; Sir James Barrie's best work had already been done. After the production of *Lady Frederick*, and other comedies, Mr. Somerset Maugham had come to a brief comparatively sterile period.

Every man on the borders of middle age must experience the temptation to praise the days that have gone, but I am compelled to admit that, after looking over the playbills of 1909, the average of excellence in the London theatres to-day, despite American melodramas which bore me to tears, and revues which might have as a sub-title 'Death, where is thy sting?', is at least as high as it was twenty years ago.

I bemoan the passing of the old-time music hall. The Tivoli with its twenty-six turns, including such superb artists as Marie Lloyd, remains for me the most satisfying entertainment within my experience. But there can be no question that entertainment has immensely improved in imagination and originality and technical skill. Mr. Noel



Coward's *Bitter Sweet* has had no equal in excellence since the production of the Gilbert and Sullivan operas, and if such old-time Gaiety entertainments as *Our Miss Gibbs* were revived, I do not believe that they would run for a week.

It is immensely difficult to attempt any sort of comparison between actors still to be seen in the theatre and the actors whom we applauded years ago and who now are dead:

*Where are the passions they essayed,  
And where the tears they made to flow?  
Where the wild humours they portrayed  
For laughing worlds to see and know?  
Othello's wrath and Juliet's woe?  
Sir Peter's whims and Timon's gall?  
And Millamant and Romeo?—  
Into the night go one and all.*

I can recall Irving's Shylock and Tree's Malvolio, Ellen Terry and Mrs. Kendal in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Forbes Robertson's Hamlet (he is happily alive though long since retired from the stage), Lewis Waller's D'Artagnan, to say nothing of Coquelin in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, Réjane in *La Passerelle* and *La Parisienne*, and Sarah in a dozen robustious Sardou melodramas. Perhaps there are no outstanding giants on the stage to-day, but the general average of acting is, I think, higher. I have never seen a better acted play than *Journey's End*, and, while some of the younger ladies and gentlemen whom gallery girls applaud at stage doors seem to me deplorably bad, the majority seems to me

extremely talented. The truth, of course, is that the theatre is always 'going to the dogs' and never gets there. In England it has never played the part in the common life of the nation that it ought to play. Now more than ever it is shackled by commercialism, and it is in this respect that Charles Cochran, if he will forgive me this free advertisement, is one of the theatre's finest assets.

He inherits that tradition of showmanship that, while it is a great thing to make money, it is often good fun to lose it. Irving and Tree were always bored when the advance booking suggested a long run. For them the joy of life was found in experiment. So it is with C. B. C.



# COLLABORATION IN PLAYWRITING

By 'John Protheroe'



HOW *can* you collaborate?' 'Do you sit at the same table or in different rooms?' 'Who writes and who talks?' 'Don't you quarrel like ——?'

These are only a few of the questions asked *ad nauseam* by those who do not realize how simple a matter collaboration may be and how advantageous to the playwright if only he sets about it in the right way.

It has been an established practice in the French theatre for many a long year. The prolific Labiche had a collaborator in practically all his innumerable plays. Other combinations that leap instantly to the mind are Meilhac and Halévy, Kéroul and Barré, de Flers and Caillavet. This practice was doubtless greatly encouraged in the first instance by an old rule of the Société des Auteurs whereby no one author might have two plays running in Paris at the same time; but it is interesting to note that, since the practice of collaboration has fallen more or less into disuse among writers of standing, French plays on the whole have deteriorated in quality, especially from the point of view of construction.

It may be taken for granted that in order to collaborate successfully the two writers concerned must have a good deal in common. They must hold the same views on the fundamental elements of dramatic technique and they must be at one in regard to whatever policy they intend following.

Each must be prepared to accept the frank or even brutal criticism of the other; in the event of disagreement, each must be prepared to support his argument logically and to take his turn at listening. But it is extraordinary how seldom any real difference of opinion arises between two collaborators who are used to working together and who hold the same fundamental principles, and, perhaps we may add, are tied together by financial interest.

The advantages of collaboration are many. To begin with, it may be generally accepted that the most difficult part of the writing of a play is the construction. Once a full scenario is mapped out, the writing is comparatively easy. This, unfortunately, is a fact which far too few young playwrights realize, and many a brilliant idea has been wasted because its originator did not take the trouble to build up his play properly before working on the dialogue. It is here that two heads are often much better than one. Once the original idea has been agreed it can be discussed in all its aspects, and it is remarkable how such discussions clarify the subject and rapidly bring order out of seeming chaos. Where the solitary writer is groping in perplexity, before an untidy sheet of scribblings, collaborators are gaily tossing little half-formed ideas to one another and before long one of these is caught and moulded into shape.

Continuous work at the same table is obviously not necessary, whether in general constructing or writing out detail. Above all things, collaboration must have flexibility. If A gets a strong feeling for an idea it is often better for him to go and get his teeth into it alone. But he does this at his

own risk for, when he triumphantly returns with half an act completed, B, from the chilly altitudes of critical detachment, may proceed to pick it to pieces. But, under the hammer of discussion, those pieces often take new form and shape, and fit comfortably into the play. Moreover, A can comfort himself with the thought that he will very shortly get his own back on B. It is in this dual criticism and dual consideration of the best manner of handling situations and characters that one of the greatest advantages of collaboration lies.

Another invaluable asset is the common stock-pot of experience, a stock-pot which is constantly being replenished. For example, while A is having a grand time with a party of Bright Young Things, B may be passing a dutiful evening with a maiden aunt. On comparing notes next morning it is suddenly realized that they will combine in an excellent scene. A has, perhaps, been brought up for the Church, while B's speciality was ending exuberant evenings in Vine Street police station; A may prefer blondes.

But collaboration, like marriage, is not for everyone. Nor, indeed, except in very special cases, such as de Flers and Caillavet, is it desirable for men of outstanding ability or genius. And yet what a play we might have had if only Barrie and Shaw had together given us *Pan and Super-Pan*!





*The Fool*

*William Nicholson*

# CRITICS' DREAMS

'A FREE HAND AND A FULL PURSE'

*A rather one-sided correspondence*



RECENTLY, for the purposes of this Review, I sent the following letter to some of our critics whom I knew to be genuinely concerned for the welfare of the theatre—the dramatic critics of *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Times*, *Punch*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the musical critic of the *New Statesman*:

Dear \* \* \*,

*It is part of my business, and, if I may add without offence, part of my pleasure also, to read your criticisms in \* \* \*.*

*I wonder if you would be sporting enough to answer the following question and give me the right to publish the answer in my little Review. I am also asking \* \* \* and \* \* \* etc.*

*Here is the question: What would you do with the theatre in England if you had a free hand and a full purse?*

*Yours very truly,*

C. B. COCHRAN

And here are the extremely interesting replies of the distinguished critics. They have not been edited in any way by me, and though Mr. W. J. Turner has made some flattering but, in the circumstances, embarrassing references to me, I pocket my natural modesty and print his 'dream' as it reached me. Mr. James Agate, of course, rides his own horse in his own way.

From CHARLES MORGAN

Dear Mr. Cochran,

The gods, I hope, intended me to be a writer, for I shall otherwise throughout my life be a stubborn opponent of their designs. Certainly they did not intend me to manage theatres or they would have granted me a gambler's spirit and a delight in the crowded company of my fellow men—gifts that they have denied me. Therefore, if I had a full purse, I should invest it in the Funds, thus giving myself—pace Mr. Tom Shaw—leisure to write what I would, and, if I had a free hand, though it is not inconceivable that I might be led into the writing of plays for the library and your waste-paper basket, I should not direct them. And, if it were made a condition of wealth and freedom that my hand and purse should be employed in the theatre, I should ask someone not unlike yourself to be an interpreter of my dreams, offering him a few suggestions for what I should like to call *The Dramatists' Theatre*.

You will observe that I do not say a National Theatre, nor do I contemplate the rule of a committee. Though art may be nurtured by the discriminating patronage of private men, for they are bold to risk unpopularity, or by the aesthetic whims of emperors who, being absolute, may bring to judgement the virtue of a single mind, I cannot conceive that dramatic art will be greatly encouraged by any organization responsible, directly or indirectly, to a universal franchise. And for my part I have one purpose in the theatre that overrides all others—namely the winning back of artists to it. Let

*us not discuss whether the people are to be educated or entertained; let us not consider how the bardolaters may be fed; let us not be side-tracked into the mazy detail of theatre construction. Bring back the artists, and all else that is worth adding will be added unto you.*

*To-day, when a young man with a talented pen wishes to make money, there is every chance that he will attempt to become a dramatist, but when a young man who has more than talent looks out upon the world it is a thousand to one that he will write a novel, a biography, a poem—anything but a play. Why? First: he knows that there exists in the modern theatre a damnable heresy which reduces the dramatist to a subordinate place and regards his play as producer's fodder. Second: he knows that in England the theatre is intellectually unfashionable. Great numbers of the people whose judgement an artist may respect never go to a play at all, having long ago despaired of finding in the theatre pleasure comparable with that yielded them by their library. Third: he has probably perceived, what is evidently true, that the time has come when serious dramatists must be allowed to put off the fetters of naturalism. They must be free, if their subject requires it, to apply poetic compression to the gigantic complexity of the modern scene. They can no longer be bound to waste time in the spiritless clichés and evasions of photographic naturalism, or in the sops of humour. They cannot be expected to stand by contentedly while naturalistic dialogue 'meanders level with its fount'—without beauty, without passion, with nothing to say to an audience except: 'Isn't this like your own silly conversation when you have nothing to say?' Is it surprising that artists will*

not write for a theatre that demands this of them? Until you had courage enough to produce, in *The Silver Tassie*, a faulty but bold example of anti-naturalism, there was little encouragement to any poet to look outside his library.

My Dramatists' Theatre would supply this encouragement. The theatre is to be shut (not let) when there is no play of high aesthetic value available for production in it. No play, whatever its theatrical, topical or 'sensational' qualities, is to be performed there unless it is the work of one who, whether his medium be verse or prose, is at root a poetic artist. The actors and producers are to be salaried members of the staff with engagements of at least a year. They are all to undergo a regular academic training, particularly in the speaking of verse. They are to be given prolonged leisure, alone and in the country, to meditate on each play before they enter into rehearsal of it. They are to be considered as interpretative artists, creative only within the bounds of interpretation. The dramatist's veto is to be absolute; his word law; if he is dead, their single purpose is to be to divine his intentions and give effect to them. They are to be exquisitely sensitive and responsive instruments, nor need they suppose that their position is a humiliating one, for the art of all artists vis-à-vis God is to respond. And while they are on the stage, the dramatist, who made them, is their god.

Writers who are writers would begin to compose for such a theatre. Men and women of parts, knowing that their intelligence was never to be insulted there, would gradually be drawn to it. Meanwhile, until the young men had written, the theatre would prove its



*intention and quality by the following productions: the four Socratic Dialogues—Euthyphro, Crito, Apology, and Phaedo—not 'adapted' but reliant on their own majesty; Turgeniev's A Month in the Country as an example of the aesthetic play; a play by Lenormand, chosen by him, as proof that the theatre was open to intellectual experimentalists who were also artists; Master Olof of Strindberg; Les Fossiles of François de Curel; The Dynasts, Peer Gynt (in a new translation), and The Cenci as heralds of the poetic form. For the time being no Shakespeare and no Shaw—and no Shaw at any time unless by some miracle he should fulfil the poetic promise of Heartbreak House, Act I, and the first scene of Methuselah. Perhaps a Hamlet after five years of preparation. By this time there might have appeared in manuscript one or two poetic plays on contemporary themes—not necessarily in the Shakespearian verse-form and, indeed, better not! If these had not appeared in five years, I should ask you to close the Dramatists' Theatre, for it is a waste of time, my dear Mr. Cochran (and this is the moral of the tale!), to organize a playhouse in a country whose poets, capable of discovering poetry in contemporary life, abstain from dramatic writing.*

*Yours very truly,*

CHARLES MORGAN

From W. A. DARLINGTON

*Dear Mr. Cochran,*

*Before I answer your question, I must put (and answer) another question of my own: 'Whose fault is it that our theatre is dismissed by every foreign critic as artistically negligible?'*

*Some people would blame the actors, or the producers, or the authors. I should not blame any of these, nor even the managers—no, not the most commercially-minded of them all. I put the whole responsibility upon the public.*

*The London play-going public is, considering its size and the length of its tradition, the worst in the world. It cares for the theatre only as an entertainment. Of the art of the theatre it is grossly ignorant, and satisfied to remain so. In fact, it has conceived a violent prejudice against knowledge. If I had the long purse and the free hand postulated in your question, it would be my aim to remove that prejudice. I should set myself to educate the public.*

*Why is our public so backward? I could suggest a variety of reasons, but the chief one is this—that we lack, what every other country of standing possesses in one form or another, a theatre that need not look only to the box-office for its means of existence. I should use your long purse—which would have to be a long one indeed—to establish and endow such a theatre. And then, having made myself independent of popular success, I should do everything that lay in my power to command it.*

*For obviously, if I am to educate the public, I must first get it into*

*my theatre. The English public, convinced that art in the theatre is synonymous with dullness, stays away passionately from any production which it suspects of containing the accursed thing. I should therefore set about winning its confidence exactly as I should win that of a suspicious dog whose broken leg I wanted to set. I should treat it gently till it trusted me, and then, for its good, I should treat it rough.*

*In plain language, I should begin by giving the public the kind of thing it already likes, using my independence of the box-office not to widen the range of my productions, but only to maintain them at the highest possible standard. From the first I should consult my own taste, never putting on a play that I did not believe to be first-rate in its own kind; but until my public had learnt to trust me, I should be very careful not to scare it away by taxing either its intelligence or its imagination too high.*

*I should give it spectacle, light comedy, farce, revue—all as good as could be got. I should even give it a crook play, if I could get one up to the standard of Mr. Milne's *The Fourth Wall*, or Mr. Vosper's *Murder on the Second Floor*. Then, when my reputation stood high, and people had begun to come to my shows simply because they were my shows, I should begin the educative process.*

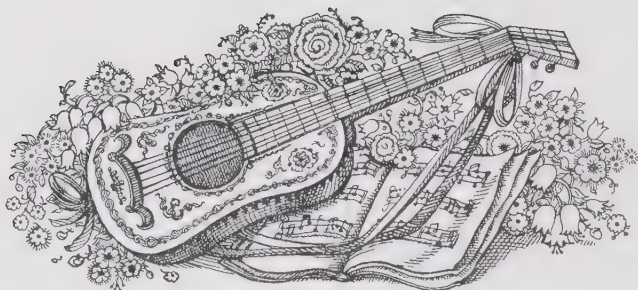
*Without any indication of a change of policy, I should begin to include high comedy, satire and tragedy among the rest. I should begin, for short periods, to rely on my public's imagination and intelligence. Playgoers would be startled and shy at first, no doubt; but little by little they would begin to rely for themselves upon these*

qualities. They would begin to understand and enjoy not only those plays which aim at a superficial photographic resemblance to life, but also those which seek to interpret life. They would begin to respond to suggestion in the theatre, instead of failing (as now) to take in any statement that is not bawled three times into their ears.

They would become a public worth serving, and I should be the devil of a fellow. Altogether, a delightful scheme; but what a relief it is to reflect that nobody is likely to call on me to put it in operation!

Yours sincerely,

W. A. DARLINGTON



From ST. JOHN ERVINE

Dear Mr. Cochran,

If I were in supreme and unchallengeable control of a theatre which was so well endowed that I need never fear to look the Treasurer in the face, I should behave almost exactly as if I were manager of an impecunious repertory theatre; for it is my experience that there is scarcely any difference between great poverty and great wealth. A very rich man, like a very poor man, can do nearly anything he likes. If there is an advantage at all, the very poor man has it, for a millionaire may be too rich to do anything he likes, whereas a tramp is too poor for anybody to bother what he does. Mr. John D. Rockefeller has less liberty to move about the earth than *Weary Willie* or *Tired Tim*. Everybody watches John D. Nobody cares two hoots about *Tired Tim*. The result is that John D. is always on his guard, continually watching his step, generally in a state of hesitation, invariably apprehensive lest he should expose himself to censure, and finally reduced to doing only those things that meet with the widest approval; but *Tired Tim*, disregarded by everybody except officious constables, walks about the world as if he owned it, unchecked by anybody so long as he does not infringe the law, and manages to see more of it than John D. is ever likely to see. There is not a hobo in the United States who does not know more of America than any millionaire on that continent.

There is more to be said for imposing monastic poverty on a theatre-manager than there is for endowing him with inexhaustible



riches. The great producer is not the man who can give you a splendid show because he has no need to consider his purse or the purse of his backer, but the man who, with less than a hundred pounds at his disposal, can put on a show that will enchant an audience. The Cochran who directed cheaply-mounted revues at the Ambassador's Theatre was as good a man as the Cochran who spent a fortune on superb spectacles at the New Oxford. In my opinion, the first Cochran was superior to the second. The danger into which the heavily-endowed producer falls is that he begins to attach more importance to the details of the drama than he attaches to the drama itself. I shall never forget the remark that was made to me by a brilliant producer immediately after the failure of a lavishly-mounted play which he had directed. He listened to my condolences, and then said: 'Do you know I put five miles of electric cable into that theatre!' An unlimited purse had thrown him off his perch: wires were more important to him than the play or the players.

But if the manager can keep his head, he can, if he is not obliged to think twice over every penny he spends, make a theatre of higher quality than he can if he must cut his productions because he must cut his costs; and if I were lucky enough to be allowed, as I have many times unsuccessfully prayed that I might be allowed, to direct a theatre in circumstances of some affluence, this is what I should do. I should assemble a company of actors and actresses of proven versatility and give them contracts for three years. Each of them would be paid an annual salary of not more than £2,000 and not less than £500, and they would be expected to act in London

*or in the provinces according to the needs of the theatre. All of them would be forbidden to act in moving pictures while under contract to me. An actor who is being filmed all morning cannot perform properly at night. Each player would be given one month's holiday in the year, receiving his pay for that period exactly as a Civil Servant does, and during illness would be paid full salary for three months, half salary for six months, and if the period of sickness lasted for longer than nine months, would be given a lump sum and the sack.*

*The company, in brief, would be placed on an economic basis, so far as the manager is concerned, and a basis of security and regular employment, so far as the players are concerned. Salaries of eighty or more pounds per week are all very well when they are earned for not less than forty weeks in the year, but they are far from well when they are earned for a fortnight. That, indeed, is the bane of the theatre, that although the actor is not always receiving eighty pounds per week, the manager is always paying eighty pounds per week, for if he is not employing A at that salary, he is giving it to B, and then to C, and so on until he is ruined.*

*Having settled the terms on which my players should act in my company, I should then deal very drastically with stage-hands, electricians and musicians. I would have no nonsense about double pay for Sunday work or double pay because a rehearsal lasted ten seconds longer than the Trade Union Secretary allowed it to last. I should tell the Trade Union Secretary to go to hell, and I should tell my stage hands, electricians and musicians that they could work*

*for me on a guaranteed pay, exactly as my actors and actresses worked, or they could clear out of my theatre and live on the dole and their union out-of-work pay. I should then engage members of the middle-class to shift my scenery and work my lights, and I am certain that I could obtain better results from them than are at present obtained from working men who have deposited their brains in their Union. If the worst came to the worst, I should expect my players to be able to shift scenery and operate lights. Why should they not? A player who has twenty-five words to say in a play ought to be glad to be given a chance to occupy himself interestingly for the rest of the evening.*

*I might dispense altogether with musicians, except, of course, for musical plays, but if I caught a member of my orchestra sending a substitute to my theatre while he sneaked off to a better-paid job, I should sack him without pity even if hordes of Trade Union Secretaries stood in battle array outside my stage-door. There is a great need for putting fiddlers in their place.*

*That part of the job done, I should then produce the best plays I could find, and put my trust in God and the taste of the general public. No one can prophesy what plays will be popular. The managers who attempt to do so generally spend embarrassing hours with the Official Assignee. The single hope a manager has of obtaining a reasonable living in the theatre or of paying his way, is to produce only those plays which seem to him to be good, whether he thinks they will be popular or not. But he must not be cranky; he must not cater for cliques; nor must he expect the public to pay for*

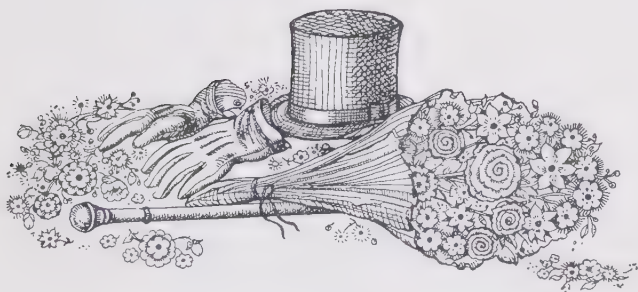
untested experiments. A laboratory theatre—there actually is one with that name in America—is not a theatre at all, and the general public ought not to be asked to pay for the productions made in it any more than it is expected to pay for the experiments that are made in hotel kitchens with new ways of cooking spinach. The mass of people are bored by experiments: they ask for accomplishment. And in my theatre, accomplishment is what they would receive.

Finally, when I sent a play on tour, I should send either the London company or one as good as the London company. All my London players would have to tour: all my provincial players would be given a London season.

I should bankrupt my theatre? Perhaps, though I doubt if I should, but at least my ruin would be glorious: it would not, as is the ruin of too many managers, be mean and ignominious.

Yours sincerely,

ST. JOHN ERVINE



*From T.*

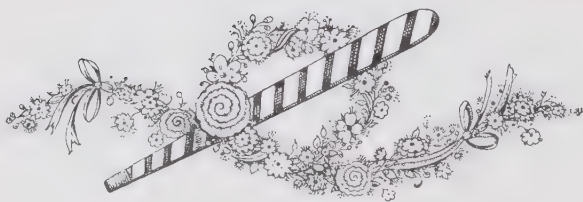
*My Dear Cochran,*

*I wonder how much guile there is behind your letter? At any rate, I can answer it quite simply.*

*If I had the purse and the free hand, I should bring both to the Town's best restaurant of the moment; should plan for you a dinner, light, discreet, admirably cooked, with wines well married, and as we reached that stimulating stage of coffee-brand-y-cigar, I should, with a gesture, take out the full purse with the free hand, press it into both of your hands, and tell you—to go on doing exactly what you are doing now, experimenting, finding talent, training talent, adventuring, losing, winning, and, whatever the issue, retaining and increasing the admiration of your friends, colleagues, critics, players, audiences, and perceptive people generally. This advertisement may be sung publicly without fee or licence. Only you do not need it.*

*Yours, etc.,*

JOSEPH THORP





From IVOR BROWN

Dear Mr. Cochran,

Much money that is made in the north is sunk in the theatres of the capital. If the fullness of my imaginary purse owed anything to industrial England, I should repay it there. I fail to see why coal royalties from Lancashire or Yorkshire mines should assist the imposition of American musical comedies on Shaftesbury Avenue instead of the restoration of the English theatre to its proper place in England. Is this a side issue? At any rate it is so huge an issue that it can only be mentioned, not discussed.

Were my scope limited to London, I should endeavour to build up an organization which would represent all the pleasures and functions of the theatre. At the least this would mean the construction, purchase, or hire on long lease of three theatres. Naturally to build would be the most agreeable, but it would take time, and how full is the purse?

Number One Theatre would be a large house. Its programme would embrace the larger theatre of spectacle and music. It would specialize in revue, because revue is our time's particular vehicle of urbane entertainment. It has united the age-long English tradition of masque (i.e. scenic revel with dancing) and the more recent convention of the music hall. It would be my ambition to have at least once a year a good scenic revue, decorated by the master-craftsmen of the time, and written by the master wits and satirists of the time. No capital is civilized without such entertainment.

*Alternately with the revues I would stage light opera of our own period, commissioning my libretti and scores as revues are commissioned, and not waiting for something to turn up. I am convinced that the English tradition of operette could not only be maintained but enhanced by the authors of our time. But one cannot expect them to give up months to writing a composition on the bare chance of finding backers later on. They must have some security.*

*Theatre Number Two. A smaller house with a company picked from unstarred players, and given the encouragement of a long engagement. This would be a prose theatre, acting the pieces that spring naturally from the life we live and constituting itself an 'abstract and brief chronicle' of our time. Here, again, I would not wait for plays to turn up, but would take the playwrights whom I fancied into close association with my theatre and commission pieces as themes occurred or as they suggested. The pieces would be written definitely to meet the requirements of this theatre and this company. The dramatist ought not to be a lonely figure, retiring to Frinton or Scawfell to compose that which he will ultimately have to hawk round from house to house. I believe that the Elizabethan habit of the kept playwright working along with the players ought to be restored. Of course, if a good thing came along from outside, we should use it, but I like most the idea of a close organization engaged upon the drama that is contemporary in its matter and method. The acting of to-day is admirably rich in quietism and naturalism. In this theatre that form of native skill and habit would find its scope.*

*Theatre Number Three. A Theatre of Personality and Novelty.*

*In the first place it would be a guest-house for foreign companies and distinguished strangers. Secondly it would be devoted to plays in which personal magnetism and feats of virtuosity were the primary interest. This I take to be just as authentic a theatrical pleasure as the quiet team-work aimed at in Theatre Number Two. Admittedly the English theatre is not rich in such individuality at present, but we might easily elicit more by encouragement. In this theatre the starring system would be unashamedly used and we should not be in the least put out by charges of showmanship and 'stuntsmanship'. The history of the English Theatre in the nineteenth century was the history of acting, of personal brilliance and bravura, and I should like to restore the connoisseurship of acting in the grand manner in which the old playgoers abounded. I would like to match players in great traditional roles as was done in the 1890's when Duse, Bernhardt, and Mrs. Campbell followed each other in various parts.*

*Here then is a policy which is at least comprehensive. Costly? In outlay certainly, but the takings should soon be considerable. If, at the end of three years, I found I was losing more in my three theatres than a man of equal means was losing on the maintenance of three normally unvictorious racehorses, I should consider myself a failure and clear out.*

IVOR BROWN

From W. J. TURNER

### A critic's dream

*. . . To have an adventurous spirit is the greatest asset that a theatrical impresario can have in any age; but in an age of 'safety first' and cold calculation it is beyond price.*

*In the theatre world of to-day there are many gamblers and, like most mere gamblers, they end by losing their own money and the money of others when they can get it—which seems to be quite often. The rest of the theatre world, with a few exceptions (of whom one is known to all of us), is made up of business men who like a large profit on a safe thing. From the latter neither the public nor the dramatists, actors, producers and décorists—if I may coin the word—can expect anything novel or exciting. The only hope of the public and the profession is the genuine impresario or showman who has a genuine passion for the theatre. The work of such a man may sometimes be bad, for he is certain to make mistakes occasionally, but some of it will be very good, and none of it will be the dull, lifeless stuff which results from a mere business man's attempt to make money out of the theatre. A true showman will always have his heart in his show and not in the box-office. His financial success will be the result of good showmanship and not of financial adroitness. His money should come rather from casting good companies than from floating bad ones.*

*I hardly ever go to a musical play in London—I am thinking, for example, of Love Lies—without a shock of surprise at the lack of taste and imagination in the dressing of principals and chorus and*

*in the décor. In spite of the examples given by the late Serge Diaghilev, most of the managers and producers in London seem to have the eyes of some dowdy seaside landlady. No doubt a real flair for costume and scenery is exceedingly rare. But the chief difficulty is to invent, to set a fashion that is new and attractive. The people of taste will soon follow a good fashion and even improve upon it. In all times society was dependent upon a few men of genius, original designers, for the new modes in furniture, clothes and decoration; but an intermediary is needed in the theatre, a man who has a flair for discovering new talent, and the best kind of impresario is always a man with this special and peculiar talent.*

*One would have thought that after the revelation of visual beauty made by Mr. Diaghilev people in the theatre could not have remained indifferent to the possibilities of dresses and scenery. On the other hand, I remember vividly a small ballet produced at one of Mr. Cochran's revues at the London Pavilion of which the dresses and décor were designed by the French painter, Derain. The dress of the principal still remains a delight in my memory, although I have forgotten the dancer's name. This ballet was an example of good judgement and adventurousness. To-day nobody in the theatre can afford to remain unaware of, or afraid of, such remarkable artists as Derain, Braque, Chirico, Picasso, whose scenic designs it is no exaggeration to describe as epoch-making; or of such an excellent English artist as William Nicholson.*

*And I am going to make a suggestion to Mr. Cochran in the hope that he will grow yearly richer and richer and so will have the means*



to spare to carry out the scheme I am going to outline—a scheme that will, I am sure, appeal to his imagination. I cannot believe that Mr. Cochran will be contented merely with making money and producing success after success, even although some of his successes may be daring experiments of which others might be afraid. I would like to see him leave something more permanent behind him as a memorial of theatrical achievement and as a stimulus to others. So I hope that one day he will carry out a scheme on the following lines. And now this is what I should do if I had a free hand and a full purse.

I would choose a convenient and commodious site not too far from the centre of London but not necessarily within what are usually considered to be the West End theatre boundaries. Upon this site I would erect a small theatre to hold about one thousand to two thousand people. The actual number of seats would depend entirely upon the internal proportions of my theatre, and those again would depend upon the site; but I would not sacrifice the internal proportions to the seating accommodation—as is done in so many modern theatres in the mad greed to get in as many seats as possible. If a theatre is not beautiful and attractive to sit in from every seat in the auditorium it is badly designed. I cannot, and nobody ought to, enjoy any play in an ugly, badly designed theatre. For example, the common contour of the first circle projecting over half the stall area is an architectural monstrosity. Everybody on the floor between the orchestra and the back wall of the auditorium should be able to see the ceiling and the whole interior of the building. This should be one of the primary rules of theatre design.

*I would choose my architect very carefully and be quite certain that I had got a genuine artist who understood what I wanted. And here I will state, for the benefit of those who do not understand architecture, that there is a golden rule by which you can tell good architects from bad. A good architect cares chiefly about two things, materials and proportions. The whole art of architecture is in the use of the right material and the planning of simple and beautiful proportions. I would have none of these many frauds who can write F.R.I.B.A. after their names, but who are only fit for making pretty drawings which look abominable when carried out. My theatre would be modern: that is to say, I should have no classical orders stuck on the façade or the interior, no 'neo-classic' ornamentation (fortunately there has never been a 'Gothic' movement in theatre building), nor would I have a modern degraded imitation of the beautiful theatres of the Italian Renaissance.*

*I would have the site planned to give a theatre, a restaurant, and a large garden, and the purpose of the garden is a secret I will keep for the present. I would divide the decoration between perhaps three artists. I would prefer English artists, but I would have the best, whether English or foreign, and at the present moment I might decide on Braque, Derain and Picasso, to do the whole of the decoration of the theatre, the restaurant and the garden respectively. When completed I would have (a) the finest theatre not only in Europe but in the whole world; (b) an architectural memorial that would perpetuate my memory—very important if one is a theatrical impresario whose fame is always shortlived; and (c) a model which would inspire*

*and educate the visual taste of the whole theatrical profession and the general public.*

*And the strange thing is that such a theatre, which I will tentatively name 'Cochran's Dream', would not cost any more to build than the most commonplace, vulgar horror ever erected by any cinema proprietor! Most theatres are made needlessly expensive by a hideous ornamentation and elaboration which serves to distract the attention from their total lack of grace and beauty of proportion. But a theatre such as I am conceiving would be a complete work of art that would draw people from all over the world within its doors.*

*Is it not strange that nobody in the theatrical world ever has such a pure and admirable ambition as to want to erect a theatre that will be 'a thing of beauty' and 'a joy for ever'? I am more and more astonished that men are content to waste fortunes upon passing shows which often are not even beautiful in themselves. It must be very boring to be merely making money, which means only having a large number of figures to your credit account in a bank book, or a list of securities at your solicitor's. Let us hope that Mr. Cochran will not remain content with this but will continue to play the role of the creator, and that he will not stop until 'Cochran's Dream' becomes a reality upon which we may all feast our eyes.*

W. J. TURNER

From JAMES AGATE

My dear C. B. C.,

Even if the purse were really full, say half a million, I should still not throw away a halfpenny on bricks and mortar. This because I have no faith in the English demand for a National Theatre. What a nation wants it has. Spain has its bull-ring, Italy its opera, France its House of Molière, Germany its State Theatre, not because these countries think they ought to have these things, but because their peoples want them. The Spaniard adores the matador and has no love for horses; every Italian scullion can troll a greasy Italian air; the French understand comedy; the Germans genuinely admire the plays of Shakespeare, and being an honest people go to see what they admire. The English boast about Shakespeare and, except for a few humble people in the Waterloo Road, hate him worse than they do the Devil. Tickle 'Em and Run will draw every Rolls-Royce in London; no car of any make ever draws up at the Old Vic. The English ceased to be playgoers as soon as there was anything else to go to. We are now a race of footballers and cricketers, and Lord's and the Stadium at Wembley are our holy ground. This preference is entirely proper, since it expresses without hypocrisy our national propensities. We do not expect an Italian to stand up to fast bowling on a bumpy wicket; why should we expect our inside-lefts to have any sympathy with King Lear? Let us have done with pretence and recognize that a National Theatre is something no Englishman has ever wanted. If two Englishmen had wanted it

seriously, and one had been half a millionaire, we should have had it.

Having decided this point I should hire the Scala for three years and spend a certain amount of capital on lowering the stage, or raising and raking the stalls-floor so as to pour attention on the scene. If the alterations were objected to, I should buy the place.

Next, I should divide the year into six months of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Congreve, Sheridan, Wilde, etc., two months of Maugham, Lonsdale, Coward, and Co. (if they would lend me their plays, which they would not!), two months of highbrow wildfowl—Pirandello, Ashley Dukes, the German Expressionists, etc.—and two months of the lowest-browed stuff I could get hold of, to give the theatre a commercial chance. N.B.—No play would be run for more than a week.

I should engage four producers: Mr. Robert Atkins to deal with the classics, Mr. Reginald Denham for the straightforward, fashionable, commercial stuff, Mr. James Whale for the highbrow-fantastical, Mr. William Mollison for the rubbish.

I should put Mr. Ernest Irving and Mr. Norman O'Neill in charge of the music.

There would be a stock-set of formal scenes, a banquet-chamber, a battle-field, a wood, a street, a drawing-room, a parlour, a garret. Mr. Whale would design these, which, with curtains, would have to do for any and every play.

I should engage a permanent company, with leave to play elsewhere when not wanted. The nucleus of such a company would be, as to the men: Baliol Holloway, Charles Laughton, Robert Horton,



Henry Kendall, John Wyse, Esmond Knight, Wallace Geoffrey, Norman Shelley, Eric Portman, Hay Petrie, Guy Pelham Boulton. And as to the women: Dorothy Green, Helene Haye, Beatrice Wilson, Marie Ney, Beatrix Lehmann, Beatrix Thomson, Madeleine Carroll, Clare Greet.

I should appoint Mr. G. W. Bishop, of the Era and the Observer, as sole Selector of Plays, and myself as Absolute Autocrat over Everything, principally because, having no fads, I conceive myself to be the fittest person to oil the cranks.

I should give everybody a living wage, less than three hundred a week and more than three hundred a year.

I should put in cinema seating and charge cinema prices.

If, after three years, my theatre looked like losing more than £25,000 per annum, which is the interest at five per cent on what I call a full purse, I should drop the tongue that Shakespeare spake and wire the place for the talkies.

Yours, etc.,

JAMES AGATE





*Masquerade at Ranelagh, 1751.*

*Woodcut by Althea Willoughby*



*Marylebone Gardens, 1770  
and Sadler's Wells*

*Woodcut by Althea Willoughby*



# A CHILDREN'S THEATRE

By Netta Syrett



THE children's theatrical season is in full swing as I write. Parents and guardians, aunts and uncles, have booked seats for *Peter Pan*, or if, as is more than likely, Mary and Dick have already seen that delightful hardy annual, are debating to which of the 'other plays' they shall take the family. There is *The Windmill Man*, or *Where the Rainbow Ends*, or *The Rose and the Ring*, or *The Tailor of Gloucester*.

Charming and deservedly popular as are these entertainments, is it not time that some enterprising manager offered to youthful theatre-goers a more varied fare?

It should not be quite impossible to find new plays for children, but even should the search prove unavailing, is it out of the question to revive some old ones?

I cherish certain delightful memories of bygone plays. One of them was *Shock-Headed Peter*, another, the beautiful poetical *Children of the King*; yet another, *Ib and Little Christina*. It seems a pity that they should be dead, buried, forgotten. Why not make them live again for the benefit of the youngest generation?

If I were 'Mistress of the Revels' in Fairyland—or even 'in management' on this terrestrial globe—what exciting experiments I would try!

In Fairyland, of course, I should not go bankrupt. As a London manager I *might*—though I don't believe it! Anyhow, pinning my faith to the children, I should take risks.

For one thing I would certainly run a Children's

Repertory Theatre, in the shape of Saturday matinées at a theatre in which a grown-up play (with Tuesday and Friday matinées) should fill the evening bill.

The 'Saturday plays' should sometimes be revivals of old favourites, sometimes new ones by dramatists who know how to write for children. Simplicity would be the keynote of my 'productions', and beauty the result!

I do not forget that there already exists a theatre run on these lines, but the little Endell Street Playhouse is too tiny to do much more than serve—at an almost nominal price—those children in the neighbourhood whose 'dear Papas', as Stevenson says, 'are poor'.

Thousands of children whose 'dear Papas' are rich, or only relatively poor, go to day schools in London, and for them, three-quarters of the year at least, there are no plays at all. Why not? There *ought* to be plays for them—plays of the right sort, for I believe that the drama might be something more than an amusement for children. I believe it might be a great influence for good, not only in the formation of taste, but of character.

A beautiful play should, *does* in fact, make a very deep impression on a child, and the more impressions of beauty, physical, mental and moral, that the youthful mind receives, surely the better for that mind!

In my dream theatre there is plenty of laughter, but also plenty of romance and much appeal to the imagination. In this mechanical age a feeling for romance badly needs encouragement, and in the drama we have a perfect instrument for its development. If only in plays for children the cinema

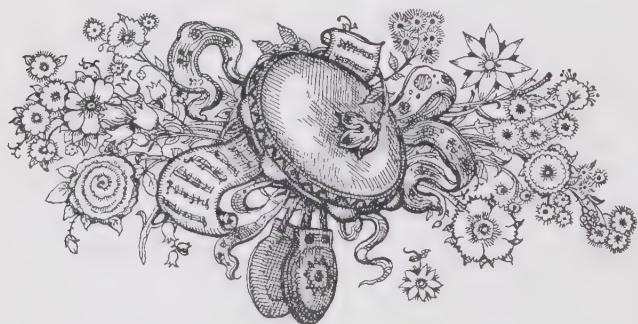


could take a part in the production of beautiful effects, how great an aid to romance would be given!

Scenes difficult or impossible to present on the stage, scenes of magical adventure, could then with ease become a visible part of the story.

Think how deliriously exciting, for instance, would be a flight of rocking-horses skimming over mountain tops and forests, and finally coming to earth on the stage, where their riders would dismount and continue the play! . . . Mermaids in the depths of ocean, dragons in fearsome caves, knights in armour riding towards 'the dark tower'. . . . Oh, there is no end to the possibilities of magic and glamour!

But this, no doubt, is the kind of dream which only a Mistress of Fairyland Revels should allow herself. And yet! Could it come true even in a London theatre? I do not know. Anyhow, it is a nice dream, and what is more, I believe it might be realized!



# A GLOSSARY OF THEATRICAL TERMS

*(For the benefit of the uninitiated)*

Compiled by Ronald Jeans

ACTORS, ACTRESSES. . . . Those who are congratulated if the play is a success.

AUTHOR. . . . The one blamed if the play is a failure.

AUTHOR, SUCCESSFUL. . . . One whose name appears on the programme in letters not quite so large as the name of the manager who has leased the theatre to the impresario who is presenting the play, but in rather larger letters than the reference to Jeyes' Fluid.

AUTHOR, UNSUCCESSFUL. . . . *See* Dramatic Critics.

AUDIENCE. . . . A gathering of optimists who want to enjoy themselves and hope for the best.

AUDIENCE, FIRST NIGHT. . . . A gathering of optimists who want to enjoy themselves and hope for the worst.

ADVERTISEMENT. . . . *See* C. B. Cochran.

AMERICAN INVASION. . . . American plays and players in London.

FREE TRADE IN ART. . . . English plays and players in New York.

BANNED (PLAYS). . . . *See* Advertising.

BLACK-OUT. . . . A momentary plunging of the stage into darkness so dense that all that the audience can see is the shirt sleeves of the scene-shifters.

BLUES. . . . A complaint prevalent among writers of American songs. Treatment: rhyme with 'shoes' or 'lose'.

BOX-OFFICE. . . . The place where you can't buy seats if the play is a success. (If it isn't, you don't want to.)

BUSINESS, BAD. . . . Is due to wireless, daylight saving, motor-cars, talkies, fine weather, wet weather, cold weather, hot weather, or general trade depression.

BUSINESS, GOOD. . . . Is due to the astuteness of the manager in choosing the play.

C. B. C. . . . According to Noel Coward, the greatest force in the theatre to-day. (*See* Noel Coward.)

CHORUS GIRL (*as she used to be*). . . . The type of girl the vicar's wife could not bear.

CHORUS GIRL (*as she is*). . . . The type of girl the vicar's wife frequently does bear.

COWARD, NOEL. . . . According to C. B. Cochran, the greatest force in the theatre to-day. (*See* C. B. C.)

COLLECTION, THE WALLACE. . . . According to Noel Coward and C. B. Cochran, the greatest (police) force in the theatre to-day.

DRAMATIC CRITICS. . . . There are only two kinds of dramatic critics: 1. Those who give themselves away by writing plays; 2. Those who give themselves away by not writing plays.

8.30. . . . In the case of a musical play, 8.35.

8.30. . . . In the case of a non-musical play, 8.42.

8.30. . . . SHARP. *See* 8.30.

EXIT LINE. . . . A line spoken by the comedian with intent to leave the audience convulsed with mirth, heartbroken at his departure, and dissatisfied with the players who are left on the stage.

- FLAT. . . . (a) A piece of scenery; (b) Any actress's maison-ette; (c) One who pays the rent of (b).
- FAMOUS. . . . An adjective used on playbills before the names of actors and actresses whose powers are on the wane.
- FLOP. . . . Signifies anybody else's failure.
- ARTISTIC SUCCESS. . . . Your own Do.
- GOSSIP, THEATRICAL. . . . A newspaper feature which nobody reads except the press-cutting agency employed by actors and actresses.
- IMPRESARIO. . . . One who borrows money from rich people to finance theatrical enterprises.
- IMPRESARIO, SUCCESSFUL. . . . One who knows the most rich people.
- INDISPOSITION, OWING TO. . . . At matinées, for indisposition, read Ascot, Derby, Wimbledon or Cup Final, according to date.
- JUVENILE. . . . A dark man of any age up to forty; a fair man of any age up to forty-five.
- MANAGER. . . . One who is managed. (*See Stars.*)
- MANAGER, COMMERCIAL. . . . One who is lucky enough to strike a success.
- MANAGER, ACTOR-. . . . One to whom the part is greater than the whole.
- MAKE-UP. . . . The disguise an actress puts on when she leaves the theatre.
- NOTICE (*newspaper criticism*). . . . A good notice: the one you show to your friends. A bad notice: the one your friends show you.

PEARLS. . . . The things actresses lose.

PUBLICITY. . . . *See* Pearls.

PRESENT, TO. . . . A manager is said to present a play to the public on the first night—this means that the public presents the manager with 24s. a stall. The common formula, A. B., by arrangement with C. D., presents E. F.'s production of *Up and Doing*, means that the production is financed by Y. Z.

PERSONALITY (*of actors*). . . . The cloak of incompetence.

COMPETENCE (*of actors*). . . . Euphemism for lack of personality.

PROMPT. . . . The payment of entertainment tax, company and staff.

O.P. . . . Opposite of Prompt: the payment of costumiers, authors and composers.

REHEARSALS. . . . A method of wasting the producer's time while the actors learn lines they should have learned at home.

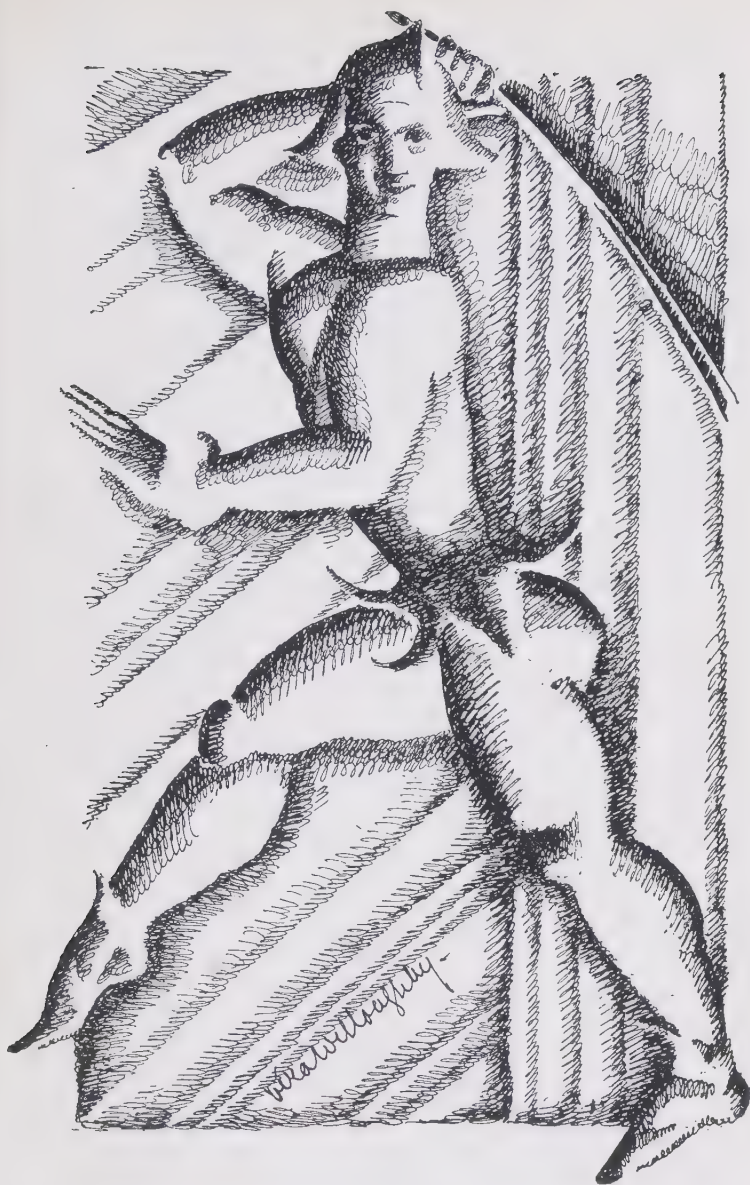
REHEARSALS, DRESS. . . . A method of wasting everybody's time while the actors forget the lines they learned at previous rehearsals.

REVUE. . . . A form of entertainment so designed that it doesn't matter how late you get there.

MUSICAL COMEDY. . . . A form of entertainment so designed that it doesn't matter if you don't get there at all.

STARS. . . . Actors or actresses who earn such large salaries that they can only afford to play one kind of part.





*Harlequin*

*Vera Willoughby*

# THE DREAM AND THE BUSINESS

By Edward Carrick<sup>1</sup>

*'Oh, but isn't he far too practical and business-like to be an artist?'*



NE hears this sort of thing said by people who are supposed to know. Distressing, because I have always felt that men such as Michelangelo, Van Dyck, Rubens, Cellini, Voltaire and Bach were artists; but, as they were all extremely practical and shrewd men of business, I suppose I must change my mind. The *Oxford Dictionary* says that an 'Artist is a practical man as opposed to a theorist', but then, what *does* the *Oxford Dictionary* know about it?

In Italy, the country that has given birth to so many artists, the word 'artista' is not only used with reference to painters of pictures, but to almost any man who excels in *a craft*, and adds something to it in the way of invention. Master carpenters and painters are 'artisti'; so is an actor, an architect, and even the common blacksmiths of Piacenza who still continue, without the aid of 'art journals', to make the most beautiful wrought iron gates in the world.

It seems then that the important and learned ones must have taken their information from the wrong source. It sounds so like the whisperings of some of those real long-haired, unwashed, velvet-coated artists who can only afford

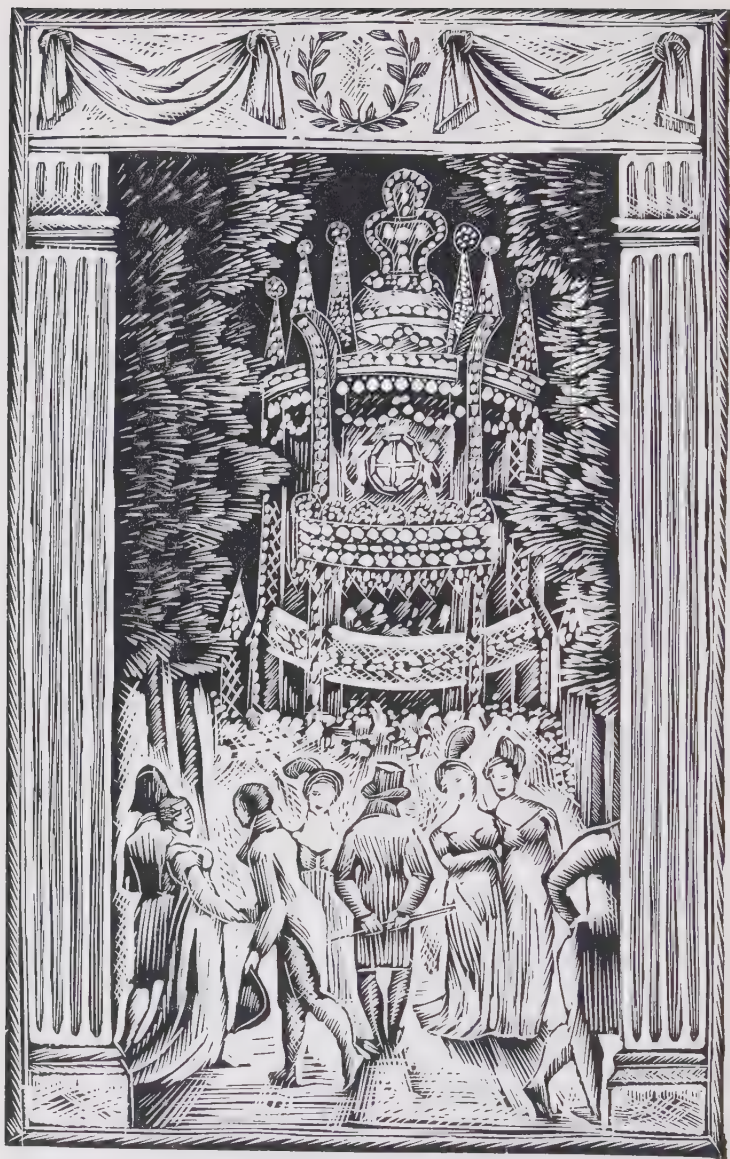
<sup>1</sup> Mr. Edward Carrick, the son of Mr. Gordon Craig of happy memory, while following in his father's footsteps desires evidently to be known as something more than merely his father's son.

£100 to £300 a year for a studio. One such said to me: 'Artists have peculiar mentalities far above that of the common herd!' These consciously artistic beings who elaborately label themselves artists *are* unpractical and unbusiness-like. If their incomes were to stop or the ladies who support them were to change their minds, they could not get work as assistant paper-hangers. They would die as pampered lap-dogs would die if their mistresses left them out in the cold one night.

No, this idea about the artist being an unpractical and unbusiness-like man is false, but is a very good smoke bomb for the amateurs of Chiswick and Chelsea to drop, to hide the deficiencies in themselves.

The other day I was told that one of our English producers was not an artist because he was popular, comprehensible and successful. The truth is that he happens to be gifted with the genius of knowing how to make the public appreciate art by giving it to them in small doses and in symbolized forms which they can understand and thoroughly enjoy.

In the eighteenth century a famous actress once had to say the lines: '*My wound is great because it is so small,*' and a learned prince who was present leaned out of his box and remarked in an audible voice: '*Then 'twould be greater were it none at all.*' If our artists can only be great artists when they are unsuccessful, incomprehensible and unpopular, surely they would be greater if they did not exist!



*Vauxhall Gardens, 1810*

*Woodcut by Alihea Willoughby*



# TENDENCIES IN THE GERMAN THEATRE

By Ernst Stern



THE new theatre is not born yet, so the old one, a made-up corpse, has to remain on the stage. Everybody in the theatre-world, on and in front of the stage, is on the look-out for the new theatre! What will it be like?

In the meantime, everywhere experiments! Everything is tried: modernizations of the old classics (Shakespeare and Schiller in modern dress); the political theatre of all shades; the theatre with a sprinkle of the film; the theatre of the young actors (with interesting new plays). A few very capable *régisseurs*, Piscator is one of them, start, fail, and start again. The influence of the Soviet theatre, in particular, and of the Russians, in general, is obvious. The well-known and older *régisseurs*, are at work too; they too experimentalize. Max Reinhardt, world famed, still gives wonderful productions. It is not his fault nor the fault of the other German theatre managers if they have to take their plays from England, France, America, or Scandinavia. The German authors do not give them the plays which are wanted. Reinhardt, the great actor-sculptor, kneads human beings out of his actors. He has to take his players from everywhere too, because his old method of having an 'ensemble' of his own is no longer possible to the same extent as before the War. A great many first-rate actors, bound by contracts of greater or less duration, formed then the 'ensembles' of most of the dramatic



theatres. The huge salaries of the present leading actors are no longer bearable by a theatre, not assisted by town or State. They are constrained to become *star theatres* to a certain extent: to a certain extent only, because in the meantime the great stock of first-class actors living in Berlin gives the *régisseur* always a possibility of forming a first-class 'ensemble' for a limited time. In any case, artistic work suffers heavily by this calamity.

The foundation of this situation was the coming of the film. The film paid well, much better than the theatre, and disorganized the 'ensembles'. Rehearsals suffered and suffer still. The actors, considering the terrible raising of all the prices to-day, were forced to prefer the higher wages of the film, to the much less attractive contracts of the impoverished theatres.

No German theatre of a standard works now without a scenic artist of high standing. A great deal of the *régisseur's* experiments would be impossible without such a collaborator. Many theatre critics in pre-war times used to give only secondary importance to the work of the scenic artist; it was not the fashion then, and all the honour went to the *régisseur*! The critics simply left their eyes at home. A very well-known musical critic sat for two acts at the dress rehearsal of a new operette; the costumes and scenery were in the rococo style. After the second act, the great man, in deep surprise, said to his wife who sat near him: 'Well, I never, but this is an operette in historical dress!' (*kostum*: operette). To-day more attention is paid to the scenic part of the play; but it is certain that a few critics still write with reluctance when anything is to be said about scenery and costumes.

'Expressionism' came in a conquering mood, but at the same time the so-called naturalistic or plastic setting maintained itself. Innumerable are the different kinds of 'isms', but there is a healthy tendency for the revival of honourably painted scenery—not a painted scenery which means to bring before your eyes an imitation of nature, but a neo-impressionistic picture, a well-painted 'tableau'. The theatres spent much money on the construction of revolving, lifting, and sliding stages, of *trottoirs roulants*, and every complication of stage lighting. If all this machinery did not bring the absolute ideal, it brought at least the possibility of quick scenic changes (of 'tempo', as we say here).

Everywhere interesting beginnings, but perhaps nothing definitely accomplished. Discussion runs high. The radio brought, the other day, a public debate, 'The Political Theatre', between two well-known people, Frederic Husong 'contra', and Herbert Thering (dramatic critic) 'pro'. It is not to be forgotten that the German theatre has not been exclusively a place for amusement, but in certain ways and for a great part of the nation a rostrum, wherefrom instruction was expected. So the situation is perhaps more complicated than in other countries. A well-known German theatre producer said once to me, as we tried to compare English and German theatres:

'Happy theatre directors of this country (England), with their plays starting at nine o'clock, with the liberty for their public to smoke a cigar during the performance! Give us in Germany this innovation and many difficult points would be solved at once!'

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60 SOME OF MY COLLABORATORS

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## SOME OF MY COLLABORATORS 61

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Nikita Balieff, Ole Bill, Carpentier, C. B. C., Chaliapine, Noel Coward, Delysia, Dolly Sisters, Countess Dudley, Douglas Fairbanks, Maisie Gay, Morris Harvey, Evelyn Laye, Mlle. Lenglen, Robert Loraine, Jessie Matthews, Morton, Mlle. Printemps, Tex Rickards, Will Rogers, Spinelli. *(These names are in alphabetical order.)*

# MISE EN SCÈNE AND ACTION

By Theodore Komisarjevsky



I AM often asked what a producer's or producing-director's job actually amounts to.

'Do you stand in the wings and keep the actors in order during the show?' 'Oh, yes, of course! It is you who arrange those wonderful lighting effects!' 'Do you drill people into acting?' 'Does the producer supply the money for the production?', or 'Does the producer cast the play?'

These are a few of the questions I have often had to answer.

Those more experienced in theatrical affairs, and not infrequently actors themselves, have the notion that the producer's job is: (1) to act every part of a play in the presence of the actors so that they may mimic him; and (2) to reproduce the playwright's directions as faithfully as possible, and with this end in view relying on the actors, the stage painter, the scenic carpenter, the prop.-master, and the various people connected with the stage, and letting them do whatever they feel like doing! Some people, particularly a certain type of selfish actors, think that the producer's business is to suppress the flow of the actor's creative powers and 'personalities' and to show up his own special gifts to the greatest advantage by inventing a series of tricks, striking settings, crowd scenes, noises, lighting effects, and various bits of 'business'. The so-called *moderns* in the theatre not unusually imagine that the producer's function is to turn plays upside



down in order to demonstrate some new theory of production or to fit a play into some quite unusual and at the same time quite unsuitable settings.

The conception of the term 'producer', even in the theatres themselves, is most elastic in our time, and all the above-mentioned suppositions of what his work might be are right. People who do actually nothing but keep order on the stage during the rehearsals and the performances, mere experts in 'matters electrical', financiers, stockbrokers, gamblers, casting-managers, drill sergeants, specialists in interior decoration, furniture designers, etc., are frequently called *theatrical producers* nowadays.

What I understand as the business of a producer—or better, of a *stager of plays* (*metteur en scène*)—is something quite different from all the above-mentioned specialities. He is an artist who gives an imaginative interpretation on the stage of a written play or of an improvisation through the ensemble of actors and with the aid of all the means of expression which the stage possesses. As the rendering of a part by an actor depends on the quality of his imagination, and as the good actor's imagination does not destroy the part written by the playwright but assimilates it, so in the same way the *mise en scène* of a play by a good *stager of plays* is an imaginative interpretation of the script of the play through the medium of the moving living bodies and voices of the ensemble of actors, the colours of their costumes, the shapes and colours of their surroundings, the sounds and different outer stage effects, and the rhythm and pace of the whole show.

The stager of plays reads the play and then gets a conception of the *story* of the play, of its *idea*, of its *emotional movement*, of every single character, of their inner and outer relationships, of the whole dynamic 'go' of the play. He visualizes and hears that 'go' of the play, feels it, and then devises his *mise en scène*, the movements and the positions of all the characters, how their lines should be said, where and how long the pauses should be, etc. He visualizes those positions and movements and hears those intonations which would be true and expressive of the actions of the characters as well as of the action of the play as a whole. These movements and positions of the actors should be also expressive of the idea contained in the play, and subordinated to different variations of the rhythm and the pace which the stager feels suitable for the dynamic development of the action. A good stager of plays must have a strong and subtle sense of rhythm and be musical. Any emotional (dramatic or comic, it is the same) scene in a play or the emotional tension of a whole play may be killed by a producer who has no feeling for rhythm, no sense of pace, no ear for music without his even being aware how it happened.

Only after the stager of plays has found how the characters should act (move and speak), does he devise his settings, his lighting and everything else which form the actors' environment on the stage. This environment must aid the acting and express the idea and the emotional movement of the production. The sets, furniture, props., lighting, etc., cannot have an absolute value and be 'admired' by the public independently of the acting. Nor must any movements,

'business' or effects be arranged by the producer in his *mise en scène* for the sake of the 'animation' of a scene, or for the sake of getting a 'picturesque' effect, or in order to get an illusion of outer naturalness.

The work with the actors is the most difficult part of a producer's job. To be able to work with them he must be a psychologist, he must know how to stimulate their imagination without enforcing his ideas and methods upon them, how to make them express themselves in the terms of the theatre, how to make them act together, and above all he must not have a *stagey* mind. I am, of course, speaking here of the theatre of plays, of genuine drama and comedy (including opera and musical comedy), where the *action* and therefore the acting is the centre of gravity. There could be, and there are, plenty of other theatres, such as the one of the marionettes, of pageantry, etc., where the acting does not so much matter, but where what does matter are the outer tricks, the picturesqueness and other effects.

The script of a play, from the literary point of view, is always an incomplete work of literature (compare it with the novel), and the more such a script is complete in itself as an independent work of literature, the less suitable is that play for acting and production purposes. The power of a show lies not only in words, but in action. I would even venture to say—perhaps to the annoyance of some playwrights, who lay stress only on their lines while their plays are being rehearsed—that the power of a show lies much more in *action* than in words, however beautiful and exquisite those words may be. What matters most on the stage is the 'life'

that lies hidden beneath the lines and also between the lines; the feelings and thoughts which prompt those lines and produce the rhythmical action and prompt the actors to 'act'. The actual words do not make them either feel or act. I venture to think that the more exquisite and deliberate the words of a play are, the less actable that play is. The essence of the theatre is more emotional than intellectual. *Le Théâtre est un peu bête, messieurs!* Ideas must be interpreted in the theatre with the help of great emotions, and emotions, restrained or unrestrained, cannot be expressed without the action. Action in the theatre, and the sincerity of that action, is a *conditio sine qua non*. Streams of lines (especially when over-elocuted, over-inflected and over-emphasized, as is very often the case on the modern English stage), as well as a mass of thought-out production effects and 'business', destroy the emotional movement of the play, and often obscure the meaning of the play. The sincerity, simplicity and economy of expressive means in the *mise en scène*, as well as in the acting and the ability of a stager of plays or an actor to produce big impressions on the audience with them is, in theatrical work, as well as in any other artistic work, a proof of great talent and is the only really effective. Doing things on the stage which have no *inner* justification, playing with redundant lines for the sake of those lines, putting stress on the voice, posing and producing conglomerations of effective 'business', etc., are proofs of very poor artistry, and reduce a theatrical show to something akin to a dish prepared by a blind cook who has also lost all sense of smell, taste and proportion.

# WHY? . . . WHY NOT?

By H. F. Rubinstein



CAN nothing be done to make England a safe place for the dramatic artist? Perhaps it does not matter. The conventional managerial policy of 'My Safety First' seems to satisfy most people. Most people, of course, do not care. The conventional manager cares because the policy does not pay. For the life of him (and he manages to live) he cannot see why, since twice two make four, two plays seemingly as like as a pair of shapely legs repeatedly fail to make identical 'hits'. Unfortunately he lacks the imagination to learn. Imaginative managers like Mr. Cochran periodically give us good things and go through bad times. And, anyway, Shaw arrived eventually, and Noel Coward, the most brilliant of the younger dramatists, is reputed to make quite a comfortable income out of his genius alone.

Perhaps it does matter. Conscience does not make Cowards of us all. A school of good drama would be rather a healthy institution, nationally speaking. The old Greeks thought it wise to encourage the production of good plays. The Elizabethans gave encouragement, without thinking, to good 'morbid' plays like *Hamlet*—to plays like those of Mr. Allan Monkhouse. Perhaps it would do people good to see the plays that Mr. Monkhouse has been giving to his generation under almost continuous discouragement. He is now over seventy years of age. Rather a shame—perhaps.

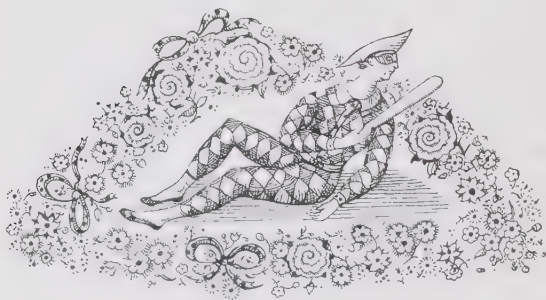
Why does the public know nothing about these plays? We all recognize—all of us who care for dramatic art—that



plays like *The Hayling Family* (Allan Monkhouse), and *The King's Jewry* (Halcott Glover), and *The Mountain* (C. K. Munro), are plays of grace, as distinct from ninety-seven out of a hundred West End successes. Three fine plays, spiritually enlightening, technically vital and unusual. See how they run! Well, there are substitutes for a 'run'. There are private play-producing societies, and there are semi-amateur provincial repertory theatres. The dramatic adventurer is grateful to these auxiliaries—purveyors of manna in the wilderness—but their limitations cramp his style and magnify his inferiority complex. The provincial repertory company, while equipped with a stage of its own, and a nucleus of enthusiastic worker-artists, is compelled to 'dilute' its programme with a liberal indulgence of 'popular' entertainment to keep its audience, and make ends meet. The (surviving) pioneer Sunday Society may be said to own a select and properly appreciative audience—and nothing else. Among the problems attending every production (one or two performances, as the case may be) are the engagement of a suitable theatre, of a special producer, of an entire cast, of substitutes for those who find themselves unable to stay the course (frequently at the eleventh hour), of accommodation for, and organization of, jig-saw rehearsals; nightmare stuff for all concerned, except perhaps the amateur and professional critics of whom the audience is composed. Miscellaneous other London coteries, more or less experimental, more or less profit seeking, more or less rationed in material resources, try out plays in their own little theatres on members more or less intransigent *vis-a-vis* the old order. In the

aggregate, these various groups and bodies could probably muster between them a phalanx of new-drama patrons running well into four—possibly into five—figures. Which brings me, rather circuitously perhaps, to the main *motif* of this grouse. Why should not these ‘minority’ playgoers join forces in the common cause? On the possibilities of such a combine it is tempting, but perhaps unnecessary, to expatiate. After the play, the audience is patently the thing, and a succession of mushroom ventures in or around London testify as eloquently to the truth of one side—as a single transatlantic enterprise illustrates the obverse—of the old ‘slogan’ identifying strength with unity. By resolute and systematic labours, the Theatre Guild has ‘roped in’ the entire intelligentsia of New York, and is thereby enabled to present plays that matter, under the most favourable conditions that love and money can provide, with the certain knowledge that they will run long enough to avert financial failure. In the process, it has developed an individuality investing a Theatre Guild production with an international significance. Obviously, London cannot have all this for the asking. What London chiefly needs at the moment is some means of ensuring that a play of special appeal to its cultural aristocracy shall survive those anxious first weeks that sap the managerial morale and so often nip success in the bud. Let us, if only for the fun of the thing, suggest the kind of simple procedure by which this could be accomplished. Make a ‘pool’ of the card-indexes of some dozen independent organizations, and establish a central bureau with power to mobilize this minority *en bloc*, as occasion requires. Such

a bureau might be controlled by a representative, or even by an independent, committee possessing the necessary moral authority. The support of the committee would be enlisted to give the initial impetus to any suitable production, whether native or exotic. It might, for example, move in the matter of Granville Barker's two post-war plays—neglected masterpieces, both of them; it could simultaneously facilitate a visit from the Habima Players of Moscow. A nominal subscription entitling members to privileged 'cuts' in the prices of seats would repay expenses, and perhaps yield a profit which could be applied to further the aims of the bureau. It might ultimately lead to—but at this point it behoves me to stay my pen. Perhaps it is all a dream. Already I seem to hear ghostly voices protesting that 'we do not want' this, that or the other, irrelevancy. In short, we do not want to bestir ourselves. But by Jingo, if we do——!



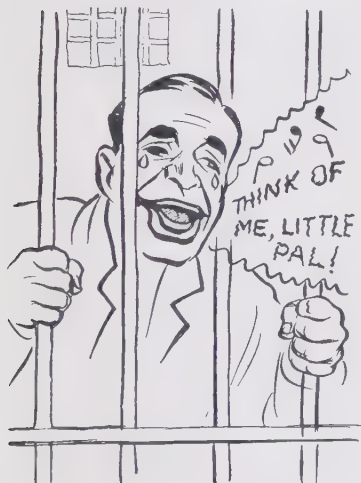
# THE MENACE OF THE TALKIES 71



A COMFORTABLE SEAT IS PROVIDED, WITH AN UNINTERRUPTED VIEW —



OR YOU CAN BE IN THE FRONT ROW FOR LESS MONEY, WITH AN EVEN BETTER VIEW —



AND SEE AND HEAR —



J.H.DOWD.

THE REAL STUFF.

# A LONG RUN

By Robert Speaight



THE romance of this extraordinary adventure, *Journey's End*,<sup>1</sup> which is still bright in the public eye, began as early as November 1928, and if through the compulsion of daily habit and its passage into the currency of national feeling it has by now worn a little thin, we can nurse the private satisfaction that it was all our own in the beginning.

My memory returns to a dingy rehearsal room in Dean Street, where we gathered for the first reading. We were sadly incomplete. The exigencies of recruiting a company for a private performance subjected *Journey's End* to the same tests and the same hazards as they have subjected many another play perhaps less good, certainly less successful. But the advance guard, of which I was one, was there. Day by day we grew in numbers, although some fell by the wayside, and some were drafted into other units, and some deserted. But by the end of six days our company was complete and the clouds cleared from the brows of our producer.

We had come together, then—as you see—some by chance, often through the defection of someone else, and from purely histrionic motives. Many of us were meeting for the first time, and we were there because we liked the play and we liked the parts—that is to say, for the only sound and honest reasons which will ever bring actors together on to the same stage. We were not interested in peace; we were

<sup>1</sup> *Journey's End* was first produced under the auspices of the Incorporated Stage Society in December 1928.



not concerned with the improvement of the British Drama; we had not yet become, as it sometimes seems to us we have now become, like a junior branch of the Civil Service. *Journey's End* was simply a fine play and not a national monument. And although kind people often talk of our production as though there had never been team work in the world before, yet in a play where the emotions and thoughts of the characters so closely and continuously interact, no one but a fool would imagine that the effect of his own performance would be enhanced by selfish playing.

We are glad to remember how casually and cheerfully that first performance grew. We were only humble volunteers: we marched into battle that Sunday night with no drums beating, and no orations to the troops. Now it is all so different. When, on the strength of the success which attended that performance, Mr. Maurice Browne decided (without even having seen us) to make his splendid venture of faith, and to put up the play, strengthened by the addition of Mr. Colin Clive to the cast, at the Savoy Theatre, we were able to reap some reward for our previous and voluntary services. But the reward was not the wages of romance. We tucked away romance in a drawer, and leaving our adventure behind us, became ordinary West End commercial actors settled comfortably into the rut of a long run. We play games and indulge in various social pursuits by day, and at night, in the intervals of playing our parts, we pay a regular round of visits to each other's dressing-rooms, and, like all good soldiers, hope for more rations. We are perfectly happy and contented, but we have left the thrills

to Mr. Sherriff and the readers of the newspapers, and even in comparison with Mr. Browne, our Paymaster-General, and his indefatigable staff, we may be forgiven for saying that we feel like Old Contemptibles and hard campaigners. We smile a weather-beaten smile when we watch the last company to be sent into the Australian Bush and the African Jungle being rehearsed like a crack regiment going into the line, and hear the text, which we cut so ruthlessly in the dingy room at Dean Street, accorded the inviolability of the First Folio.

But when we are on the stage, we are seldom bored. Of how many plays can it be said that their interest survives their success, yet speaking for myself I can always remember *Journey's End* as a fine play, and forget that I and my colleagues and Mr. Maurice Browne once in an indiscreet moment bequeathed it to the nation. Except for a short holiday, generously given to us by the management, we have played it consecutively for ten months, yet I never cease to be moved and entertained by the performances of my fellow actors, of whom I can truthfully say that I have never seen any of them give less than their magnificent best to the public. I watched the other evening Osborne and Raleigh's last ten minutes before the raid, and the splintering of Stanhope's iron nerve under the death of the one and the ingenuousness of the other, and I was moved as I was moved when they first sent me the play to read, and when I saw it assume its present shape in the dingy room at Dean Street. Yes, I thought to myself, I would join up again, even though it meant a lifetime of active service.



'Astley's' (In and Out!)

Woodcut by Althea Willoughby

# 'QUEX' GOSSIPS ABOUT THE THEATRE



T first nights these days—leaving out such regular first-nighters as Lord Lurgan, whose kind face, head of silver hair, and friendly way of taking a companion by the arm 'are concomitants of a very shrewd understanding of the commercial chances of a play; Mr. Edward Marsh, private secretary to a succession of spot-light politicians, who beams on every play whether it is good or bad; and the woman at the back of the pit who gets in her 'Bravo!' before anyone else—there are half enthusiasts, half experts, to whom theatre-going is the serious thing in life.

## *The Thirty-two Laughs*

At the Aldwych Theatre, a young woman behind me kept count of the lines that got laughs. She reached thirty-two by the middle of the second act.

But the biggest laugh had no line. It followed Mr. Tom Walls's calm admission to the astonished Mr. Ralph Lynn that he was a thief. '*I can't believe you,*' replied Mr. Lynn—and glanced hurriedly at his watch-pocket.

## *The Ink Beasts*

Then when Mr. Walter Hackett's *Sorry You've Been Troubled* was produced at the St. Martin's, and at the first interval the majority of the men got up from their stalls to move towards the foyer—and perhaps beyond that—I heard a woman say to her companion: '*The ink beasts are going out*'.

She said it sweetly, much as a child watching a Barrie play or a poetic pantomime would have said it. At the time she

spoke she was looking not at any well-known critic, but at a jolly-faced banker who, with a permanent under-secretary right behind him, was squeezing past the knees of people who were keeping their seats.

But perhaps, after all, my ears deceived me, and what she really said with such confidence was '*The drink beasts*'. But I think not.

*He wrote SHERLOCK HOLMES*

On the other hand, at this season's first performance of *The Pirates of Penzance* at the New Savoy Theatre, two elegant young men stood close by the door of the box which Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Bennett and Mr. Alastair Taylor, one of Mr. Bennett's partners in the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, were occupying.

'*Who is it who backs these Gilbert and Sullivan operas?*' asked the one of the other.

'*A fellow named D'Oyly Carte,*' was the drawling, superior reply.

'*And who's he?*'

'*Oh,*' with a slower drawl and an increased note of superiority, '*he's the fellow who wrote "Sherlock Holmes".*'

*Duse and Miss Fay Compton*

I have one very different memory—a tribute from one actress to another. It was after Duse's final performance, an afternoon performance, at the now vanished New Oxford Theatre; her very last performance in England—*Così Sia*. In the last, act for nearly half the time she was on the stage, Duse crouched behind a pillar in the mountain shrine to





*If Sir Alfred Butt lost his head and went 'Expressionist'!*



*Ceri Richards*

which she had gone to die. For many minutes the audience saw only her outstretched hands and heard the agony in her voice. Her voice, gentle, pleading, could be mistaken for no other voice in the world; and her silences were more moving than many competent actresses' most poignant outbursts.

I saw Miss Fay Compton at the end of that performance. She was crying. She said she felt she could hardly face her own audience that night.

### *My Souvenir*

I have a souvenir of that last visit to London of the great Italian actress—the staff, cut from a young tree, on which she leaned in *Così Sia*.

The curtain was down. Mr. Cochran took me to the temporary dressing-room Duse had had put up at the side of the stage. Her trunks were packed up and ready for removal; the wooden staff stood in one corner of the room. I asked if I could have it and the Duse's manager said I could.

I am no souvenir hunter, but that relic of one of the actresses of all time, of a performance which made one leave the theatre with feelings of humbleness and reverence, I shall always keep.

### *Mr. Noel Coward's Way*

*Bitter Sweet*, both in London and New York, proves that it is wise as well as artistically right to allow a man possessed of the unusual gifts of Mr. Noel Coward to be his own producer as well as author and composer. *Bitter Sweet* bears the marks of having been strongly produced—all the acting, all the intonations, all the 'business' showing the stamp of

one man who knows what he wants and knows how to get it —although I must mention that one of the actresses at His Majesty's Theatre has learned her lesson so thoroughly that she offers a nearly perfect imitation of the Noel Coward manner, including the jerkiness and the imperfect intonation.

### *Miss Evelyn Laye's Demand*

When Mr. Archie Selwyn, the American *entrepreneur*, was in England last summer arranging to produce *Bitter Sweet* in New York, I spent a week-end with him. It was just before the contract with Miss Evelyn Laye to appear in the American production was signed. He told me a neat example of Mr. Coward's convinced resolve that there should be only one way—his way.

Miss Laye had seen the operette and gone over the part. She and Mr. Coward were in the empty theatre; she said to Mr. Coward: 'Of course, you will change the end of the second act for me,' and her air was one of insistence.

But Mr. Coward smiled soothingly and replied: 'My dear Evelyn, nothing will be changed—and now, if you will kindly sit in the dress circle, I will show you how I would like you to walk across the stage before starting to sing this song.'

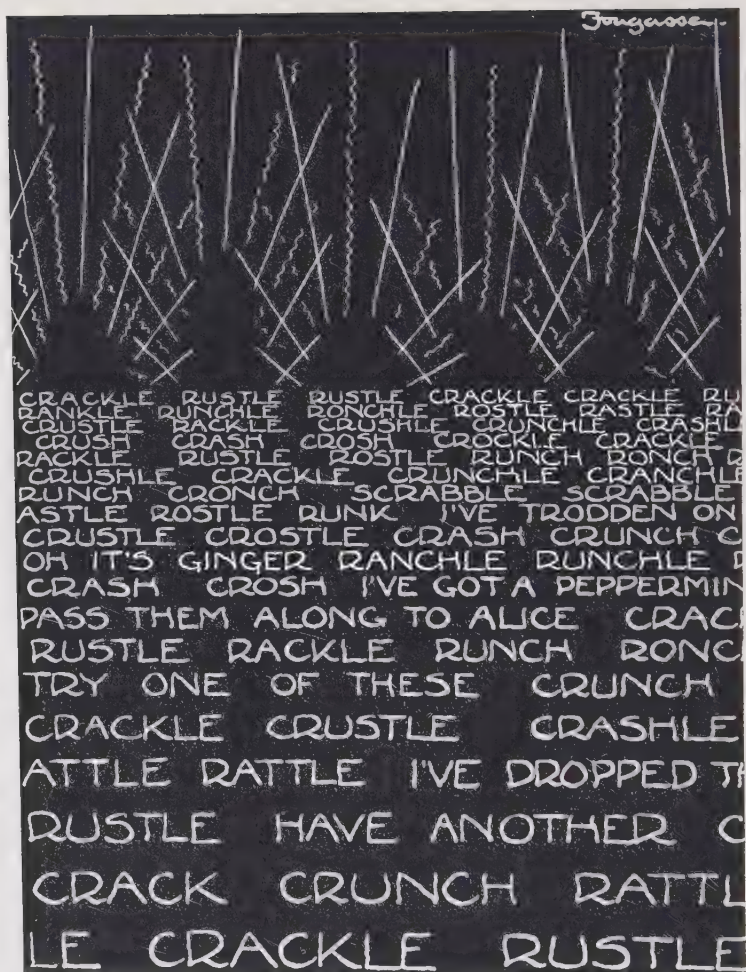
And, well 'produced' by Noel Coward, Miss Laye in New York has made the hit of her career.

### *A Barrieism*

Mr. Owen Nares told me of something he heard Barrie say during a rehearsal of *The Little Minister*. Sir James noticed that one of the ladies of the company was getting very thin.

'Miss ——,' he said, 'I saw an empty taxi-cab drive up to-day, and you got out of it.'






... leading naturally to the tentative inquiry whether, in view of the apparently generally accepted theory that one cannot sit through any performance unless continually nourished with chocolates, it would not be possible to wrap them up in some slightly less audible material.

*Fougasse*



# THE AMATEUR THEATRE IN ENGLAND

By Geoffrey Whitworth

O much has been written of late about the amateur dramatic movement in England that one fears to repeat what has already been said a hundred times. How often have we been told that 'the theatre of to-day is in the hands of the amateurs', or that 'by their encouragement of the "team-spirit" our community theatres are doing a work of unequalled social value'! The element of exaggeration in both these statements detracts not at all from their essential veracity, although it is the latter proposition which contains perhaps the larger element of truth.

Certainly the amateurs, viewed as a class by themselves, represent the most alert and intelligent body of present-day playgoers. At any Drama League conference the discussion always turns sooner or later on some point connected with the professional theatre, and I am always struck by the perspicacious quality of the argument which is sure to arise. Contrary to what one would have found thirty or forty years ago, it will not be the star actor or the playwright with the biggest reputation who comes in for most of the attention. Rather is it the younger actor or actress, the budding playwright, who most deeply engages the interest of our modern amateurs. For they are grown tired, thank heaven, of trying to imitate the stars who have already 'arrived'; and are most appreciative of those professional beginners who

are nearest to themselves in that their worlds are still to conquer.

And is not this all to the good? Is it not a sign of grace that those most keenly interested in the art of the theatre should have their eyes fixed upon its future rather than upon its past, or even its present? I am sure that it is; for it implies an evolving body of sympathetic understanding which is just what the professional theatre needs now more than anything, if it is to survive and develop in face of its so many and so doughty rivals.

The only danger is that in his enthusiasm for what is new and untried the amateur may tend to under-value the very necessary standards and traditions of dramatic art. Geese are good. But to see every goose as a swan is to extirpate the race of swans. And swans, too, have their place.

The swans, however, need not be too much afraid. For the professional theatre has nothing to fear from the amateur. I am not ashamed to confess that I have often obtained a genuine and unique pleasure from amateur performances, but this does not blind me to the limitations of the amateur stage, and I know well that whenever those limitations are overpassed, the amateur is an amateur no longer, and his stage becomes inevitably a new centre of professional activity and employment. The histories of two such typical institutions as the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, and the Birmingham Repertory Theatre prove my point.

It is significant, too, that the only amateur societies which have developed into full-blown professional theatres have been situated out of London. There are doubtless some

excellent amateur organizations in London and round about London. But they are a luxury with us, rather than the necessity which they have proved themselves in the provinces; so, if you would see the unprofessional actor at his best and proudest, you must go to places like Stockport, or Huddersfield, or Norwich among the towns—or, in the country, to mere hamlets like Kelly in Devon, or Great Hucklow in Derbyshire, where, remote alike from the glamour of publicity or the bias of commerce, the art of the amateur flourishes unnoticed—a natural product like the trees and the corn.

It is the British Drama League which for the past ten years has made it its business to foster all these varied manifestations of amateur drama. At the present time there are more than sixteen hundred societies affiliated to the League. Many are attached to other institutions—to schools, churches and chapels, co-operative societies, and the like. In all they must represent some hundred thousand individuals.

The Drama League helps by advice through the post, by its monthly journal, *Drama*, by sending lecturers and producers when desired, by organizing an annual 'Festival of Community Drama', and not least, by its lending library of over twelve thousand volumes—plays, critical books and illustrated books on the theatre. These are housed in most attractive premises overlooking the river, at 8 Adelphi Terrace, London, W.C.2. Any reader of these words who would like to see the library or to gain first-hand information as to the League and its work, will be welcome there at any time.



*The Profiteer's Wife*

*O. Messel*



*The Profiteer*

*O. Messel*





*Dance, Little Lady: A memory*

# MODES AND MANNERS FOR THE THEATRE

By Junius

**L**ATE-COMERS to the theatre can adroitly add to the general effect of their entrance by politely protracted disputes as to who shall sit where—their silhouettes meanwhile making an agreeable pattern against the scene—by



cheerful greetings to adjacent friends, by the leisurely removal of wraps and furs, by the noisy purchase, opening and circulation of chocolates and bonbons for the continuance of their inconveniently interrupted lunch or dinner. After which, audible conjecture as to what has happened and who is who upon the stage, with appropriate embroidery

of comment, argument and reminiscence, will give their turn a finish which will be appreciated by all serious students of contemporary modes and manners.

\* \* \*

**F**URTHER explanations of jokes or details of plot should be clearly expressed, or they may well be missed even by immediate neighbours, because of the distracting noise made by the people on the stage.



**T**HE omission of the operations of tweezer and razor from the *entr'acte* toilet is now, by the brightest people, regretted as unnecessary respect for an outworn convention, and it is rumoured that current technique will be amended so as to be more in accord with contemporary thought.

THE pathetic practice, still occasionally surviving from a less abrupt and more conventional age, of certain weak-kneed hypersensitives who, arriving unavoidably late, elect not to take their seats till the end of the act rather than inconvenience others is obviously to be viewed by any robust person with quiet contempt.

\*

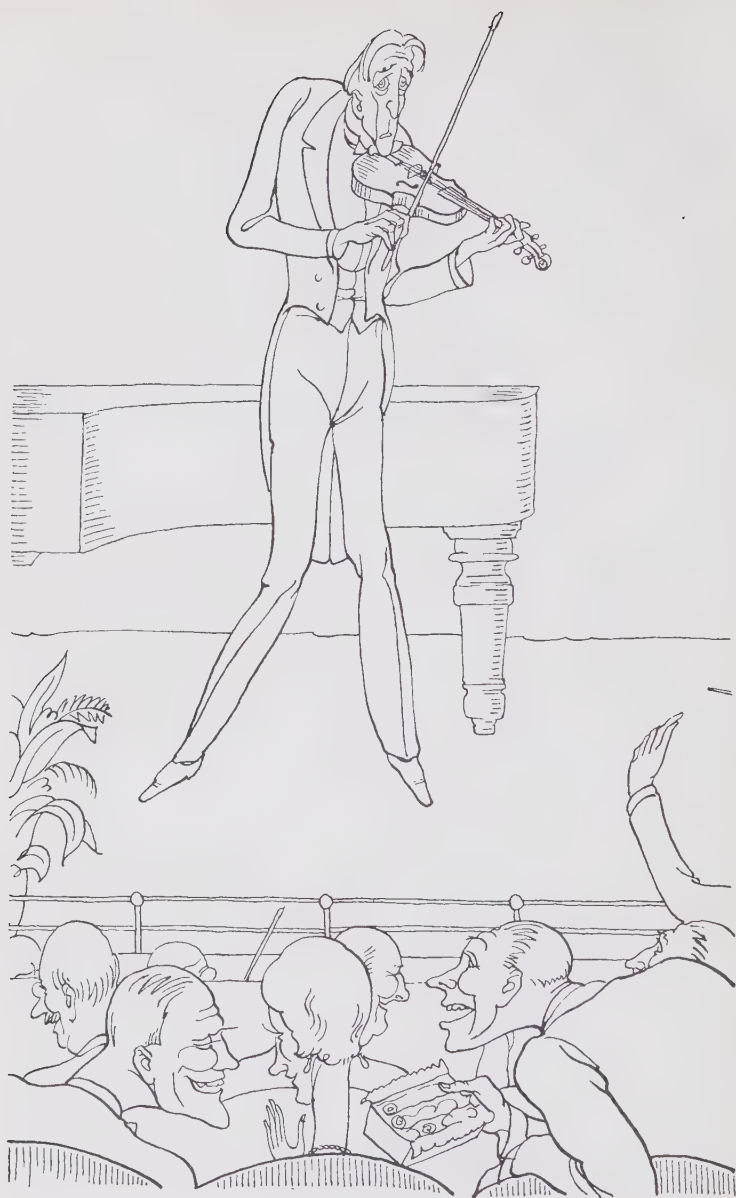
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IF any gentleman in the theatre should rise to make your belated passage to your seat more easy, or should hold open a door for you, remember that it is no longer considered good form (dear madam, or sir, as the case may be) to acknowledge this act of exaggerated courtesy.



ETIQUETTE, which does not allow critics to express by applause their approval of performances witnessed by them in their official capacity, does not forbid them to convey to their colleagues or lay neighbours by agonized countenance, crude gestures of disdain, hoarsely murmured comments, deep or fitful sleep, the pain or weariness which they suffer so heroically in the cause of duty.





PRODUCERS should not forget that, though authors, composers, actors and singers may no doubt still be considered necessary, they themselves are at the highest point of the curve of evolution of the theatre. Let them remember that if the now extinct Actor-Manager chastised his servants with whips, it is for the really awake and aware Producer to lash them with scorpions. Let him be but true to type—the largest and the thickest—and all will be well.

\* \* \*

THE really modern Producer will not be likely to forget that what made the theatre of Euripides and Aristophanes, of Shakespeare and Congreve and Sheridan, of Calderon, of Goethe, so relatively inefficient was that they lacked the many-levered electrical switch-board which Science and Commerce have now put at the service of Art; or that the highest act of creation is expressed in the significant words: 'Let there be light!'

\* \* \*

WELL-INSTRUCTED *entr'acte* musicians in the English theatre will carefully compose their faces so as to express the gratified conviction that such of the audience as have not fled to the bars are listening to them with rapture, even though they have long learnt their lesson that music is only provided as an aid to bright talk—which the English, a costive people in the matter of conversation, find difficult except against a discreet background of noise. The pained or even angry frowns that have been known to

appear on the glistening brows of temperamental violinists of foreign birth unacquainted with our traditions are considered to be in deplorably bad taste, and a characteristic instance of that self-control in which foreigners are so notoriously lacking.





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/E. BAWDEN/

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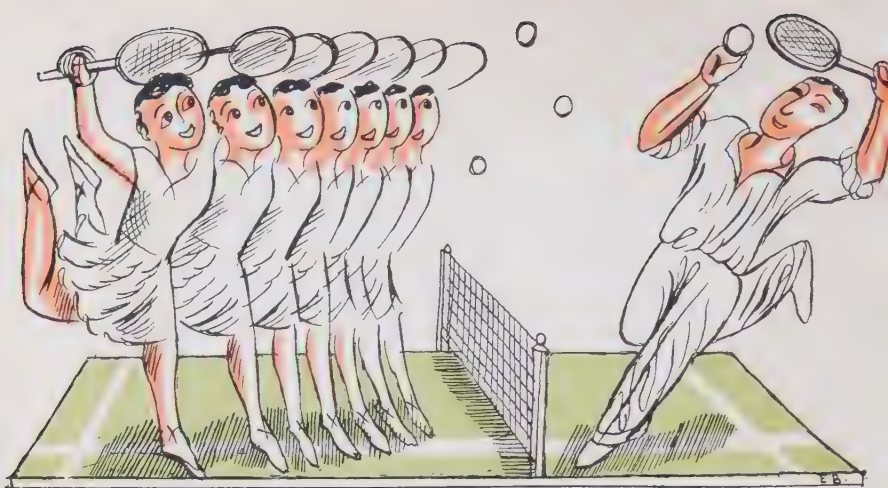
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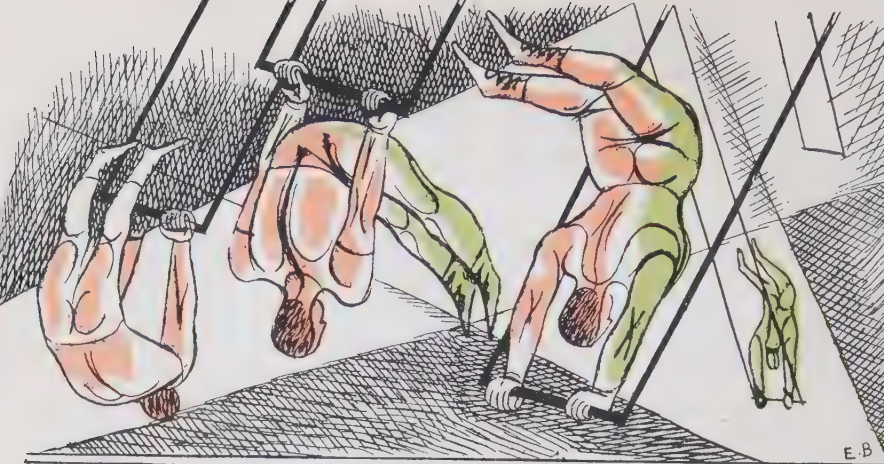
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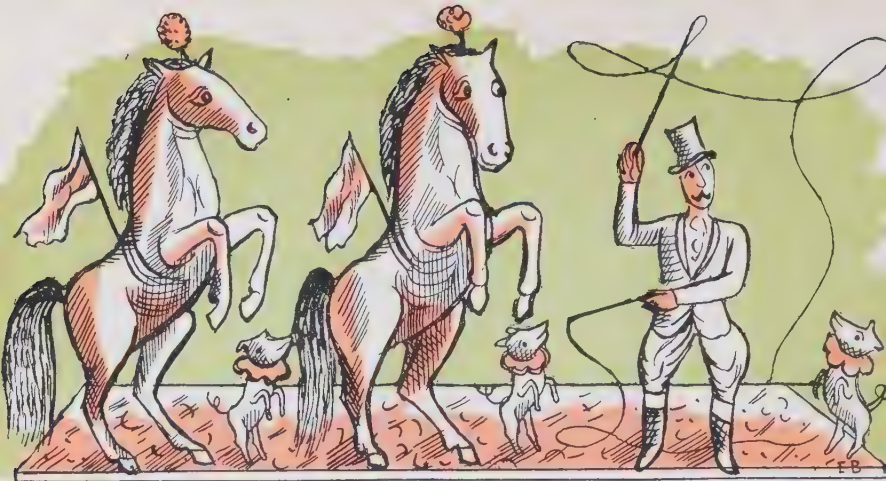


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